# Cold War Crossings:

# Border Poetics in Postwar German and Polish Literature

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**ABSTRACT**

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Focusing on transborder travel narratives by two German authors and one Polish author, "Cold War Crossings" investigates how their writing responds to the postwar demarcation of separate Eastern and Western spheres of influences. Central to each of their oeuvres is the topos of the border broadly conceived, from the material, ideological, and psychic boundaries of the Iron Curtain to the Saussurean bar of the linguistic sign. By presenting border-crossing as an act of both political and aesthetic transgression, these writers advance uniquely literary alternatives to the rigid geopolitical divisions of their age. This dissertation analyzes the way in which each author's poetics of the border informs, among other things, their manipulation of narrative structure, their unique employment of figurative language, and their shared proclivity for intertextuality, all of which address and reorient different kinds of textual boundaries. In this way, it is a contribution to the ever-expanding field of border studies and other scholarly investigations of the discursive production of mental maps. At the same time, however, the dissertation argues by way of its three case studies for a closer examination of the formal elements of literary texts that often go overlooked in such analyses. Conceived as an interdisciplinary and comparative study, "Cold War Crossings" seeks to overstep barriers between national literatures as well as disciplines by combining cultural studies, literary criticism, and historical analysis. Furthermore, the dissertation's joint study of German and Polish literatures also contributes to recent debates on Europe as it counteracts traditional Eurocentric approaches that disregard Eastern Europe.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Works frequently cited have been identified by the following abbreviations:

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|---|---|
| B | Arno Schmidt, "Berechnungen I," in *Essays und Aufsätze*, vol. 3 of *Bargfelder Ausgabe III* (Bargfeld: Arno Schmidt Stiftung, 1995), 163-168. |
| *BO* | Zbigniew Herbert, *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2004). |
| BS | Uwe Johnson, "Berliner Stadtbahn (*veraltet*)," in *Berliner Sachen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1975). |
| *BU* | Uwe Johnson, *Begleitumstände: Frankfurter Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980). |
| *CP* | Zbigniew Herbert, *The Collected Prose*. *1948-1998*, ed. Alissa Valles (New York: HarperCollins, 2010). |
| *DBA* | Uwe Johnson, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973). |
| *MD* | Zbigniew Herbert, *"Mistrz z Delft" i inne utwory odnalezione*, ed. Barbara Toruńczyk (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2008). |
| *SH* | Arno Schmidt, *Das steinerne Herz: Historischer Roman aus dem Jahre 1954 nach Christi*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 2 (Bargfeld: Arno Schmidt Stiftung, 2013). |
| *SS* | Arno Schmidt, *Schwarze Spiegel*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 1 (Bargfeld: Arno Schmidt Stiftung, 2013). |
| *WZ* | Zbigniew Herbert, *Wiersze zebrane*, ed. Ryszard Krynicki (Kraków: Wydawnictwo a5, 2008). |

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# INTRODUCTION

## I. Slipping through the Iron Curtain

Though published in 1958, Wolfgang Koeppen's travelogue *Nach Russland und anderwohin: Empfindsame Reisen* was broadcast over the radio on November 12, 1957, as Alfred Andersch had commissioned it as part of his *Radio Essay* series for the Süddeutsche Rundfunk Stuttgart.[1] Koeppen's collection of travel essays, containing descriptions of the author's trips to Spain, the Netherlands, Russia, and London, arose out of a state-sponsored project meant to orient West German listeners to the still unfamiliar circumstances of postwar Europe.[2] As a contributor to this project, however, the author begins his trip through East Germany, Poland, and the Soviet Union by drawing the most dominant geopolitical symbol of his time into question:

> Ich wollte aber nicht fliegen, [...] ich wollte mit dem Zug fahren, ich wollte Tag und Nacht die Räder rollen hören, [...] ich wollte spüren, wie es nach Osten geht, ich wollte merken, wie die Sonne und die Stunden mir entgegenwandern, ich wollte mich langsam dem verschlossenen Staat nähern, [...] ja, ich wollte den Eisernen Vorhang sehen, vielleicht die große gefährliche Chimäre unserer Zeit, ich wollte die Chimäre beobachten, und wenn der Eiserne Vorhang keine Chimäre war, wollte ich sehen, wie man ihn heben kann oder wie man durch ihn hindurchschlüpft [...].[3]

Koeppen introduces his travels as a means of potentially counteracting the political-geographical status quo of the early Cold War, anchored as it is in the symbol of the Iron curtain stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic and dividing the European continent into two hostile halves. The journey is justified by Koeppen's desire to experience firsthand the administrative, ideological, and cultural

[1] Klaus Scherpe, "Literary Détente: Wolfgang Koeppen's Cold War Travels," trans. Rachel Leah MagShamráin, *New German Critique*, no. 110 (2010), 97.

[2] Anthony Waine, "Literature and the Radio in Post-War Germany: A Portrait of the Süddeutscher Rundfunk," *European Studies* 16 (1986), 83-84.

[3] Wolfgang Koeppen, *Nach Russland und anderswohin*, in *Berichte und Skizzen I*, vol. 4 of *Gesammelte Werke in sechs Bänden*, ed. Marcel Reich-Ranicki, Dagmar von Briel, and Hans-Ulrich Treichel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986), 104.

partitions between the Eastern and Western Blocs and his refusal to blindly accept labels, which he refers to elsewhere as "signposts" (*Schilder*):

> Und die Hölle auf Erden? Ist sie ein geographisch zu erfassender Ort, ein begrenztes Territorium? Gibt es irgendwo ein Schild: Hier beginnt die Hölle, hier endet das Paradies? Und wenn es dieses Schild geben sollte, – wer hat es aufgestellt? Darf man ihm trauen? Ich halte nichts von Schildern. Ich reiste in die Sowjetunion.[4]

In Koeppen's understanding, such signposts operate as symbolic borders, as lines of demarcation that not only undergird national boundaries but establish a hierarchical relation of 'own' and 'other.' In light of this interpretation, a 'sentimental journey,' in which the traveler relies only on their sense impressions and immediate experiences, constitutes an attempt to come face to face with the realities of postwar Europe in a manner that rejects well-established cultural and political stereotypes. Moreover, the possibility of "hoisting" or "slipping through" the Iron Curtain, the border between East and West that Koeppen wishes to scrutinize, is provided not only by the trip but by the act of writing itself, as well as the conveyance of that text to a West German audience.

Around the same time that Koeppen travels to the USSR at the behest of Andersch and the Süddeutsche Rundfunk, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz makes a similar trip to Moscow as the editor of the Polish journal *Twórczość* (Creativity) created in the aftermath of the Second World War. Unlike Koeppen, however, Iwaszkiewicz's journey is of an official political nature, as the Polish author is a delegate to Parliament and the head of the Polish Writer's Union (*Związek Zawodowy Literatów Polskich*). Moreover, the political alliance between the Polish People's Republic (*Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa* or PRL) and the Soviet Union, both members of the Eastern Bloc, presupposes a higher degree of collaboration than Koeppen can expect. Indeed, Iwaszkiewicz's description of the conversations between Eastern Bloc writers in Moscow and elsewhere appears to downplay the Soviet Union's often oppressive means of ensuring ideological subservience

[4] Ibid., 103.

throughout the region, particularly under Stalin: "Recently, writers have begun to visit Moscow and the capitals of other Soviet republics in order to, in the heat of discussion and the clash of opinions, devise new ways of living and working together and new forms of cultural interaction among the socialist nations."[5] One could claim that the author-politician is merely trying to alleviate tensions between the PRL and the USSR following worker uprisings in October of 1956. However, in Iwaszkiewicz's eyes the basis for the collaboration between *Twórczość* and the Soviet publication *Oktiabr* (October) turns out not to be the socialist cause, but rather a broader foundation—"European culture":

> What might be the best collaboration between *Twórczość* and *Oktiabr* – how do we establish everything that connects us? No doubt, much separates us, and we can quarrel forcefully about many things. But even more connects us, above all the unity of the great European culture.[6]

Like Koeppen, whose detailed reportage on the art, lifestyles, and social mores of the Soviet Union continually dismantles the traditional conceptual divisions between Eastern and Western Europe, Iwaszkiewicz insists on the existence of a shared cultural continuum extending across the European continent and crossing the Cold War partition between the two hostile blocs.

His travelogues, published in journals like *Twórczość*, as well as in collections like *Książka o Sycylii* (Book about Sicily), *Gniazdo łabędzi: Szkice z Danii* (Nest of swans: Sketches from Denmark), and *Petersburg*, demonstrate the author's career-long endeavor to bring together within

[5] "[P]isarze ostatnio poczęli odwiedzać Moskwę i stolice innych republik radzieckich, aby w ogniu dyskusji, w starciu opinii wypracować nowe formy współżycia i współdziałania, nowe formy wzajemnego oddziaływania kulturowego narodów obozu socjalizmu." Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, "Spacer po Dnieprze" [Walk around the Dnieper], in *Rachunki włóczęgi: Felietony i szkice podróżnicze* [A vagabond's accounts: Feuilletons and travel sketches] (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2016), 134. Translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[6] "Jakaż może być lepsza współpraca „Twórczości" z miesięcznikiem „Oktiabr" — jak konstatacja wszystkiego, co nas łączy? Zapewne dzieli nas bardzo wiele i o wiele rzeczy możemy się kłócić, mocno kłócić. Łączy nas jednak jeszcze więcej spraw, a przede wszystkim jedność wielkiej kultury europejskiej." Ibid., 136.

the domain of literature spaces and traditions that had been torn asunder by history.[7] In an essay entitled "Rachunki wlóczęgi" (A vagabond's accounts), in which Iwaszkiewicz surveys receipts from his recent travels and compares this perusal to the act of writing itself, the author suggests literature's capacity to reassemble a previously united European realm that had been ruptured during the war and in its aftermath:

> In fact, this is the work of a poet, searching through pages of white or colored paper for the reflection of certain transient things. [...] [My itineraries] remind me of the time before the war, before '33, when a person could travel around Europe as easily as around one's county, and around one's county as easily as around Europe. Hotel receipts from Poznań and Paris, from Kielce and Sandomierz, mixed with receipts from London, from Wrocław, from Paris again, from Konin and Prague...[8]

Like the intermingling hotel receipts that present a jumbled map of Europe, binding not only East and West but also metropolis and province (e.g., Konin), the essay, punning off the dual meaning of *rachunek* as both "report" and "receipt," consists of a series of short travelogues relating visits to London, Radom, Kielce, Paris, and Wrocław in the year immediately following the end of the Second World War. In this sense, it represents a microcosm of Iwaskiewicz's larger corpus of travel literature, mediating between cities and regions on either side of the Iron Curtain by drawing them into the same imaginary space, which in Iwaszkiewicz's case is a highly subjective one as he

[7] In his analysis of Iwaszkiewicz's travel writings, German Ritz insists that the disparate collections of travel writings do not create an overarching continuum. In doing so, he overlooks the unifying function of the author's subjective approach, which allows the various destinations to converge in Iwaszkiewicz's memory. However, Ritz does indicate that the figure of the border, in its varying forms, is central to Iwaszkiewicz's work, as the latter not only symbolically straddles the demarcation line between East and West but also undermines the conceptual divide between traditional gender roles, among other things. German Ritz, *Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz: Ein Grenzgänger der Moderne* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1996), 232-3; 16-17.

[8] "A właściwie jest pracą poety, który szuka w kartkach białego czy kolorowego papieru odbicia pewnych przemijających rzeczy. […] Przypominają mi [moje itineraria] dawne przedwojenne czasy, czasy sprzed roku '33, kiedy kręcił się człowiek po Europie jak po własnym powiecie, a po własnym powiecie jak po Europie. Rachunki hotelowe z Poznania i z Paryża, z Kielc i z Sandomierzu mieszają się z rachunkami z Londynu, z Wrocławia, znowu z Paryża, z Konina i z Pragi…" Iwaszkiewicz, "Rachunki włóczęgi" [A vagabond's accounts], in *Rachunki włóczęgi*, 5-6.

makes clear in a subsequent sentence from that same essay: "Every trip is essentially a very artificially constructed expedition into the depths of oneself or one's own life."[9]

## II. Cold War Crossings

The German and Polish authors discussed above employ distinctly literary means in problematizing the dominant political geography of the early Cold War, which manifests itself most clearly in the image of the Iron Curtain, the symbolic border between Eastern and Western Europe drawn by Winston Churchill in his famous "Sinews of Peace" speech in 1946. Though only Koeppen explicitly characterizes his travelogue as an effort to cross this border in the hopes of eroding the constructed divide between the two blocs, both authors present their writings as attempts to fashion a continuum capable of spanning the European continent at a moment when mainstream political and cultural discourses undergird its division, the diplomatic basis for which was provided by the Potsdam Agreement. This dissertation will focus on the works of three authors who, like Koeppen and Iwaszkiewicz, create border-crossing narratives that respond to the postwar demarcation of separate spheres of influence. Furthermore, to a more pronounced degree than the writers mentioned above, the authors discussed in the following—Uwe Johnson, Arno Schmidt, and Zbigniew Herbert—place the figure of the border at the center of their texts, and not only the border in its political-geographical form. Each of the works discussed, all of which revolve around central characters passing from one side of the Iron Curtain to the other, manifest a unique border poetics, in the sense that the crossing of political-geographical dividing lines represented in the content is doubled by the transgression of formal boundaries in the text. For instance, Arno Schmidt's novel *Das steinerne Herz*, in which the protagonist smuggles a rare book across the

[9] "Każda podróż jest w gruncie rzeczy bardzo sztucznie skonstruowaną wyprawą w głąb samego siebie albo w głąb własnego życia." Ibid., 6.

demarcation line between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, troubles the boundaries of the text through its unfettered intertextuality, such that the reader is unsure where Schmidt's work begins and ends. Moreover, these texts draw attention to the contribution of art, literature, and language to the conceptual construction of borders around states, regions, cities, neighborhoods, and other spaces, as well as to the divisions between presumably distinct national, ethnic, and economic groups. Zbigniew Herbert's travelogue *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* (Barbarian in the garden), to name one example, traces the leveraging of hegemonic cultural narratives by individual communities throughout history as a means of establishing their legitimacy and authority over against other communities. In light of this fact, the Polish author's travels through France and Italy not only portray the unimpeded peregrinations of an Eastern European "barbarian" in the "garden" of Western culture. By unearthing the stories and practices that have been suppressed in the centuries-long process of consolidating a Western European canon, Herbert's travelogue labors to dismantle the culturally constructed barrier around Western Europe.

However, what arguably distinguishes the works of these authors from the travel narratives of Koeppen and Iwaszkiewicz is precisely the amount of labor demanded by the border-crossings they both portray and perform. Although Uwe Johnson's novel *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, the focal point of the first chapter, begins with the protagonist's processing at the inner German border, the remainder of the text represents his attempt to come to terms with the unfamiliar East German state that strikes him as comprehensible not in comparison to his West German home, but "nur von sich aus." (*DBA*, 21) The comparisons or *Vergleiche* that one finds throughout Koeppen's *Nach Russland und anderswohin* arise sparingly in Johnson's highly experimental novel, often merely as demonstrations of the West German protagonist's seeming incapacity to understand the

GDR.[10] As the following chapter will demonstrate, the *Vergleiche* that seem most capable of capturing East German life for a West German observer, and vice-versa, are metaphors and other instances of figurative language that defy traditional comparative logic. Furthermore, all three authors acknowledge the linguistic, idiomatic, and stylistic divisions inaugurated between the Eastern and Western blocs already in the early years of the Cold War.[11] Their literary juxtapositions of various languages, dialects, jargons, and modes of writing do not attempt to elide this separation, but rather endeavor to fashion an expansive style capable of integrating all of these different ways of speaking and writing. Of course, this is not to say that the authors succeed in constructing a non-hierarchical continuum between these various languages and discourses in their works. In Schmidt's novel, for example, the author submits the Polish language to a vulgarization quite distinct from his recreation of English and French, which remains faithful to those languages' spelling rules.[12] Other boundaries prove equally arduous to overstep. In Herbert's art-historical

[10] The highly impressionistic nature of both Koeppen and Iwaszkiewicz's travelogues, signaled by their shared use of the genre of the 'sentimental journey,' arguably limits the degree to which they can engage authentically with the reality of Cold War borders. Perhaps as a response to Iwaszkiewicz's 'sentimental' travelogues, some of which were published before *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, Herbert opens his collection of travel sketches by stating his refusal to adopt the "easier form" (*łatwiejszej formy*) of the impressionistic diary. (*BO*, 5) For more on the genre of the 'sentimental journey' in the twentieth century, particularly its Polish iteration, see Dorota Kozicka, *Wędrowcy światów prawdziwych: Dwudziestowieczne relacje z podróży* [Wanderers of real worlds: Twentieth-century travelogues] (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 31-33.

[11] For instance, in F.C. Weiskopf's *Verteidigung der deutschen Sprache*, published by the East German publishing house Aufbau Verlag in 1955 and intended to spell out stylistic guidelines for GDR authors, issues a threatening interdiction of dialect in a "realist" East German literary tradition: "Aber selbst dann gehört der Erzähler auf unsere schwarze Liste, weil er ein nur wenigen Leuten bekanntes, unklares Dialektwort gebraucht und so gegen ein von allen Meistern der realistischen Prosa befolgtes Gesetz: von weit her geholte und krause Dialektwörter zu vermeiden und Jargon nur in der direkten Rede und sehr sparsam anzuwenden – verstoßen hat." As the following chapters will show, dialect is central to both Johnson and Schmidt's uses of language. Moreover, the Weiskopf text also associates neologisms with a reprehensible "West German avant-gardism" and even cites an example of a "groteske Neubildung" from none other than Arno Schmidt: "*mitten im Sonnengepralle*," which appears in his 1953 short story *Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas*. Franz Carl Weiskopf, *Verteidigung der deutschen Sprache: Versuche*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1960), 16-17.

[12] However, considering Schmidt's broader refusal to follow the guidelines of traditional German orthography and his unorthodox phonetic transcription of German dialects, it is difficult to ascribe a value to his transcription of Polish on the face of it. As will be argued in the second chapter, the phonetic transcription of Polish and the conflation of Polish and other Slavic languages must be evaluated against the backdrop of the novel's content, specifically its relatively resentful depiction of the postwar population transfer of Germans from Silesia.

travel essays, the author presents the ekphrastic description of paintings, sculptures, and architecture as a means not only of transferring content from one medium to another but also as an instrument for overcoming the separation between the artist's contemporary cultural standpoint and that of spatially and temporally distant communities. Nevertheless, much like Johnson's failed comparisons, Herbert repeatedly emphasizes the inadequacy of his literary transpositions of visual art, either owing to his culturally and historically inherited inability to interpret a work's signs or to the insufficiency of language in general to name the object of description. To put it in linguistic terms, the focal point of this dissertation is not the perfective but rather the imperfective meaning of the verb 'to cross'—Polish *przekraczać* as opposed to *przekroczyć*: as the following three chapters will demonstrate, each of these authors is preoccupied not so much with the arrival at the other side of the border, but rather with the act of crossing itself.

Like the protagonists of the travel fiction and travelogues discussed in what follows, this dissertation attempts a border-crossing in its combined concentration on authors writing from either side of the Iron Curtain: Arno Schmidt took part in the same West German *Radio Essay* program as Wolfgang Koeppen, and Zbigniew Herbert, unlike his contemporaries Czesław Miłosz and Sławomir Mrożek, never defected from the Polish People's Republic, although he spent much of the sixties and seventies abroad. The status of Uwe Johnson is more complicated since he grew up and was educated in the German Democratic Republic but moved to the Federal Republic in 1959 and published all of his works with the West German publisher Suhrkamp Verlag. None of these authors, however, are treated in an exemplary fashion. For instance, the third chapter's interpretation of Zbigniew Herbert's *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, alongside other early poems and essays by the author, is not meant to provide a universal model capable of representing Polish culture of the period more broadly. To impute such exemplarity to the author would be to reinforce

the conception of a potentially uniform Polish identity, a belief that Herbert himself strives to undo in his writings. At the same time, however, the undeniable differences between the distinct cultural traditions and political contexts in which these writers work are taken into account. Of course, this is not to claim that there are no overlaps in these authors' responses to influential literary precedents: all three of the authors read and react to, in one way or another, the German genre of the *Bildungsreise*, and arguably none of them more so than Herbert.[13] However, the political and cultural history of borders inherited by a Polish author in the middle of the twentieth century is quite distinct from that of a German, as will be discussed in greater detail in the next section of this introduction. The mere projection of German conceptions of borders and a German literary history of borders onto the Polish author's work would not constitute an act of border-crossing, but rather one of cultural chauvinism.

Still, the distinctions between these authors' works and the traditions in which they operate by no means foreclose the possibility of a productive dialogue between them. The decision to bring these texts, and thereby the contexts they carry with them, into contact with one another presumes the possibility of productive intercultural exchange between the authors' works, the distinct political circumstances to which they respond, the cultural antecedents and contemporary interlocutors they address, and the scholarship that has interpreted them. For instance, scholars who have treated the representation of borders in Arno Schmidt's *Das steinerne Herz* exclusively in the German context have focused predominantly on the inner German border and the checkpoints between the Eastern and Western sectors in Berlin.[14] However, placing the text side

[13] See Zbigniew Herbert, "Pana Montaigne'a podróż do Italii" [Mr. Montaigne's trip to Italy], *Węzeł gordyjski oraz inne pisma rozproszone* [The gordian knot and other scattered writings], ed. Paweł Kądziela (Warsaw: Więzi, 2001), 39.

[14] See, e.g., Johanna M. Gelberg, *Poetik und Politik der Grenze. Die Literatur der deutsch-deutschen Teilung seit 1945* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018), 140-151; Stephan Kraft, "Nicht mitten hindurch, sondern darüber hinweg und auf beiden Seiten zugleich. Zur deutsch-deutschen Grenze in Arno Schmidts Roman *Das steinerne Herz*," in

by side with the work of Zbigniew Herbert throws into sharp relief the novel's portrayal of the postwar displacement of Silesian Germans, a substantial section of the work that depicts the human and material consequences of the diplomatic drawing of the Oder-Neisse border. Furthermore, Johnson's adoption of descriptive style in reaction to the division of postwar Germany, as explained in his programmatic essay "Berliner Stadtbahn," dovetails with Herbert's employment of ekphrasis, both modes of writing highlighting a static or circular enumeration of elements over the linear unfolding of a narrative. Nevertheless, these individual observations are not synthesized into what one might call, in the singular, *a* border poetics of the early Cold War. Instead of operating in a dialectical mode aimed at the development of an overarching synthesis, this dissertation's exploration of border poetics is more in line with the Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, understood as the "plurality of independent and unmerged [*nesliyannych*] voices."[15] Indeed, Bakhtin, writing in response to a Soviet vulgarization of dialectical thinking promoted in the interwar period, serves as a valuable theoretical interlocutor for these writers. His familiarity with both German and Slavic literary and intellectual traditions positions him as a potential means of bringing together the works and traditions discussed. Nevertheless, even his expansive theory of dialogue does not serve here as a system under which these various writers might be unified and thereby, as Bakhtin puts it in his description of vulgar Marxist dialectics, "canceled out."[16]

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*Grenzen im Raum – Grenzen in der Literatur*. *Sonderheft der Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 129 (2010), ed. Eva Geulen & Stephan Kraft, 127-146.

[15] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 6. Though Bakhtin does not explicitly mention this meaning of *sliyanie*, one could read his criticism of a "merger" (*sliyanie*) between independent voices as a response to the Soviet-led weakening of national traditions within the USSR in promotion of a *sliyanie* of "Soviet people." For more on this Soviet conception of *sliyanie*, see Katharina Buck, "Limitations to the Nationalising State: The Case of Kazakhstan," in *The Transformation of Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe: Ideas and Structures*, ed. Karl Cordell & Konrad Jajecznik (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2015), 195.

[16] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 26.

## III. Literary Borders

Over the past few decades, particularly since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent rise in scholarly work on globalization in the 1990s,[17] borders have become an increasingly popular site for research in the social sciences and the humanities, ultimately resulting in the creation of interdisciplinary fields (e.g., borderlands studies, border studies, and border theory) that focus exclusively on the creation, reinforcement, and dismantling of borders and the communities that live on either side of them.[18] Though the conceptual distinction between border(line)s and borderlands is an important one, the contemporary understanding of which was most influentially formulated by Gloria Anzaldúa in her work on Chicano culture,[19] the difference between these fields in terms of their objects of study is more or less negligible. All of them treat borders, be they transnational, national, regional, or municipal, as social constructions with no underlying natural determinant, neither physical-geographical nor biological. As the political geographer Henk van Houtum explains: "[B]y claiming that all borders are human-made the present debate logically focuses on the construction of borders, in other words, *how* borders are made in terms of symbols,

[17] Alexander C. Diener & Joshua Hagen, "Introduction: Borders, Identity, and Geopolitics," in *Borderlines and Borderlands: Political Oddities at the Edge of the Nation-State*, ed. Alexander C Diener & Joshua Hagen (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 9.

[18] For a helpful overview of border studies see Thomas M. Wilson & Hastings Donnan, "Borders and Border Studies," in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson & Hastings Donnan (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 1-25.

[19] "[T]he Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle, and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy." Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, 4th ed. (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012), 19. The borderland therefore places emphasis on the intermingling of two or more communities, with both cooperative and violent results, in a shared territory, as opposed to the separation implied by the traditional notion of the border(line). Furthermore, Anzaldúa's conception of borderlands productively shifts the consideration of this dynamic from the (national) administrative border to any zone of contact.

signs, identifications, representations, performances and stories."[20] Still, despite the acknowledgment of the contribution of "representations, performances and stories" to the symbolic consolidation of borders, border studies continues to be a field dominated by social scientists, anthropologist, and historians, with the most well-known collections and journals rarely featuring articles treating literature, film, or performance studies. Indeed, one could argue that the allegedly interdisciplinary field of border(lands) studies is itself bounded in a manner that runs contrary to its aims and principles. Despite the appearance of a large number of collections and monographs dealing explicitly with the mutually influential interaction between political-geographical borders and literature,[21] collaboration between literary studies and border studies in its present form still appears to be more of a posited goal than a reality.

Quite to the contrary of this neglect of literature in border studies, a brief glimpse at a highly influential German text on borders suffices to demonstrate the centrality of literature in the construction of, in this case, national borders. In Karl Haushofer's geopolitical work *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung*, first published in 1927 and then republished in 1939 as a plea for the annexation of South Tyrol, the erstwhile tutor of Hitler and Rudolf Hess in Landsberg argues that literature is more capable than either jurisprudence or political science of strengthening the presumably atrophied "border instinct" of twentieth-century Germans. It rehabilitates this *Grenzinstinkt* through vivid descriptions of borderlands: "Wenn wir uns [...] die positive Seite des Problems klarmachen, wie eine richtige, geopolitisch wie kulturpolitisch gleich

[20] Henk van Houtum, "The Geopolitics of Borders and Boundaries," *Geopolitics* 10 (2005), 675.

[21] For exemplary work within the context of German literature see Johanna M. Gelberg, *Poetik und Politik der Grenze*; Eva Geulen & Stephan Kraft (eds.), *Grenzen im Raum – Grenzen in der Literatur*; Richard Faber & Barbara Naumann, (eds.), *Literatur der Grenze – Theorie der Grenze* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995); Yuliya Komska, *The Icon Curtain: The Cold War's Quiet Border* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Dieter Lamping, *Über Grenzen: Eine literarische Topographie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001).

instinktsichere Betrachtung von Grenzmarken erzieherisch wirkt, so brauchen wir doch bloß etwa nach einer bekannten Schilderung des jungen Goethe zu greifen."[22] This statement is immediately followed by a citation from Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, in which the German bard describes his first glimpse of the Strasbourg Minster, a confrontation eternalized in *Von deutscher Baukunst*, one of the founding texts of the *Sturm und Drang*:

> Da ich nun an alter deutsche Stätte dieses Gebäude und in echter deutscher Zeit so weit gediehen fand, auch der Nahme des Meisters auf dem bescheidenen Grabstein gleichfalls vaterländischen Klanges und Ursprungs war; so wagte ich, die bisher verrufene Benennung Gothische Bauart, aufgefordert durch den Wert dieses Kunstwerks, abzuändern, und sie als deutsche Baukunst unserer Nation zu vindiciren, sodann aber verfehlte ich nicht, erst mündlich, und hernach in einem kleinen Aufsatz *D.M. Erwini a Steinbach* gewidmet, meine patriotischen Gesinnungen an den Tag zu legen.[23]

In *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, the material surrounding this passage is unconcerned with German national identity and borders. Haushofer's appropriation of Goethe's text is certainly at odds with the latter's intentions, as Haushofer himself indicates, referring to the author of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* as a "des nationalen Chauvinismus gewiß unverdächtigen jungen Mann" and acknowledging that the passage lacks "eine politische Zielsetzung, jede Einstellung zur Macht über diesen verlorenen Grenzraum seines Volkes."[24] Still, one can perceive the utility of this excerpt for the interwar geopolitical thinker attesting to the inadequacy of post-Versailles borders and urging for the recovery of German *Kulturboden*. Despite its incorporation into the Kingdom

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[22] Karl Haushofer, *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Kurt Vowinckel Verlag, 1939), 21. Haushofer also praises the travel writings of Alexander von Humboldt for his "Eindruck vom Übergang vom atlantischen in den pazifischen Bereich" (24) and the writings of Gustav Freytag, whose novel *Die Ahnen* (42)—which Arno Schmidt read while working on *Das steinerne Herz*—and whose *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (131) Haushofer draws upon as evidence to his claims, making no distinction between these literary texts and historical or scientific sources.

[23] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Dichtung und Wahrheit. Zweiter Teil,* vol. 18 of *Goethe's Werke* (Stuttgart: J.C. Cotta, 1818), 308-9. In Haushofer's citation, *veruffene* and *Deutsche Baukunst* (with a capital D) are emphasized, though he fails to acknowledge his added emphasis.

[24] Karl Haushofer, *Grenzen in ihrer geographischen und politischen Bedeutung*, 22.

of France in 1681, at the time of Goethe's studies, Strasbourg was a diverse city made up of speakers of French, German, and Alsatian. Nevertheless, it was also a city that many German speakers claimed to be German "in its essence."[25] Against this historical backdrop, Goethe's designation of the Minster's location as an *alte deutsche Stätte*, his description of the medieval period of its construction as *echte deutsche Zeit*, and his re-naming of the architectural style from *Gothisch*—a derogatory term applied to architecture by Italian Renaissance thinkers—to *deutsch* all appear as part of a re-inscription, a symbolically performed seizure of a space that, from a political-geographical vantage, belongs to a different state.

The influence of literature on the construction of national and cultural borders in the Polish context is, as already mentioned, distinct from the German case, particularly as a Polish state did not exist for nearly the entirety of the long nineteenth century, the period during which the cultural demarcation of national boundaries was most actively being carried out. As Serhiy Bilensky has indicated in his study *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, the Polish Romantic thinkers who provided the most authoritative blueprints for the Polish national project did draw inspiration from German conceptions of a national community. However, their ideas and the formulation of these ideas were often radically distinct from those of their German counterparts.[26] Polish Romantic philosophers appropriated the thought of German idealists and altered it in such a manner as to serve their own (national) ends. For example, August Cieszkowski in his *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie* appropriates and tinkers with the Hegelian philosophy of history in a manner that grants the Poles a future world-historical role.[27] Furthermore, literature played an arguably more

[25] Rachel Chrastil, *The Siege of Strasbourg* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), 6.

[26] Serhiy Bilensky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe: Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian Political Imaginations* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1-3.

[27] Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 133-4.

explicit function in Polish intellectuals' projections of borders for a future Polish state than it did in the German identification of spaces for territorial expansion. The mapping of new, former, and imagined spaces was particularly prevalent in Polish Romanticism, as Dorota Siwicka emphasizes in her introduction to the collection *Geografia Słowackiego* (Słowacki's geography): "Romanticism is a very forceful experience of geography—the existence of borders, paths, and means of locomotion, the separation, longing for lost places, and above all the poignant presence of new places."[28] For instance, the poet-geographer Wincenty Pol, whom some have called the "father of modern Polish geography" (*ojciec nowożytnej geografii polskiej*),[29] began his career as a geographer with the 1835 publication of the poem *Pieśń ziemi naszej* (Song of our land), which constituted a work of *geografia serca* ("geography of the heart").[30] As opposed to the German national project, which focused more on linguistic and ethnic frontiers, most Polish intellectuals and authors of the nineteenth century did not reference language or ethnicity in their drawing of national boundaries, at least in the East. One observes this feature of Polish national discourse in Pol's text mentioned above: "And do you know, young brother,/ Your consanguineous tribes/ The highlanders and the Lithuanians/ And the holy Samogitians and the Ruthenians."[31] As Bilensky notes, Poland and the Poles function here as a metonym for the aggregate of ethnic groups that lived within the bounds of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which represented the

[28] Dorota Siwicka, "Wstęp do rozmowy" [Introduction to the conversation], in *Geografia Słowackiego* [Słowacki's geography], ed. Dorota Siwicka & Marta Zielińska (Warsaw: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2012), 6.

[29] Antoni Jackowski & Izabela Sołjan, "Wincenty Pol 'ojciec' nowożytnej geografii polskiej" [Wincenty Pol – 'father' of modern Polish geography], in *Wincenty Pol jako geograf i krajoznawca* [Wincenty Pol as geographer and sightseer], ed. Antoni Jackowski & Izabela Sołjan (Kraków: Instytut Geografii i Gospodarki Przestrzennej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006), 51-91.

[30] Serhiy Bilenski, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, 18.

[31] "A czy znasz ty bracie młody,/ Te pokrewne twoje rody?/ Tych Górali i Litwinów,/ I Żmudź świętą i Rusinów." Wincenty Pol, *Pieśń o ziemi naszej* [Song of our land] (Poznań: J.K. Żupański, 1843). 10; Bilensky, *Romantic Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, 18-9.

common denominator for most discussions of imagined Polish borders from 1795 until the formation of the Second Polish Republic in 1918.[32]

Despite the relative inattention to literature in the field of border studies, the role of literature in the construction of mental maps and the discursive demarcation of territory has been treated in an abundance of scholarly works, particularly since the publication of Edward Said's groundbreaking study *Orientalism* in 1978, which coined the term "imaginative geography" in its critical analysis of the creation of the 'Orient' by Western European intellectuals and literati.[33] Said's description of the act of "designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space beyond 'ours' which is 'theirs'" as a "universal practice" opened the employment of his method to scholars working in regions that did not have the same history of material colonial practices as the Middle East.[34] Considering the broader goals of this dissertation, an essential example of this trend is offered by Larry Wolff's 1994 publication *Inventing Eastern Europe*, which traces the Enlightenment-era development of the concept of Eastern Europe via the travelogues and literary texts of Western European writers. In the introduction, Wolff identifies the Iron Curtain as overlaying and exploiting a centuries-old division shaped by the writings of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Herder, among others: "Churchill's oratorical image of the iron curtain was powerful and persuasive, [...] [y]et its aptness and prescience also concealed a part of what made Churchill's imagery so powerful, the traces of an intellectual history that invented the idea

[32] Ibid., 19; Przemysław Hauser, "Polska w międzywojennej Europie" [Poland in interwar Europe], in *Dwa Dwudziestolecia: Geopolityka. Państwo. Społeczeństwo* [Two twenty-year periods: Geopolitics. The state. Society], ed. Przemysław Hauser & Witold Mazurczak (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2010), 13.

[33] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 54.

[34] Ibid.

of Eastern Europe long before."[35] Concerning the German literary tradition, Kristin Kopp's *Germany's Wild East* builds upon and broadens Said and Wolff's approach in its investigation of literary, cartographic, and cinematic contributions to a burgeoning late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century German discourse that portrayed Poland and its inhabitants in colonial terms.[36] In the Polish context, Maria Janion's *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna* (Uncanny Slavdom) draws on Said's postcolonial method in its treatment of, among other things, Polish Romanticism's representation of the Ukrainian steppe as an unbounded space open to appropriation by its western neighbors.[37] And more recently, Przemysław Czapliński's *Poruszona mapa* (A shifted map) has made similar use of Said's work in discussing distinctly literary attempts to construct alternative imaginative geographies in the wake of the Eastern bloc's dissolution.[38]

Nevertheless, though Said's conception of imaginative geography will provide a valuable resource in the subsequent chapters, this dissertation departs from his discourse-analytical mode and its handling of literary works as effectively captive to pre-established, institutionalized discourses. In this regard, the following analyses are highly indebted to both Kopp and Czapliński and their shared emphasis on the agency of the cultural representations they discuss. By

[35] Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 3-4.

[36] Kristen Kopp, *Germany's Wild East: Constructing Poland as Colonial Space* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 8; 15. Along similar lines as Kopp's analysis, Niels Werber treats Gustav Freytag's nineteenth-century novel *Soll und Haben* as a proto-geopolitical work that profoundly influenced geopolitical thinkers like Friedrich Ratzel and Karl Haushofer. See Niels Werber, *Geopolitik zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2014), 24-44.

[37] Interestingly, both Kopp and Janion indicate their authors' employment of the imaginary landscape of the American frontier in their works. Kristen Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*. 21; Maria Janion, *Niesamowita słowiańszczyzna: Fantazmaty literatury* [Uncanny Slavdom: Literary phantasms] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006), 169.

[38] Przemysław Czapliński, *Poruszona mapa: Wyobraźnia geograficzno-kulturowa polskiej literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku* [A shifted map: The geographical-cultural imagination of Polish literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016), 9.

highlighting the active participation of the representations discussed in a discursive process open to alteration, Kopp preserves the possibility of counter-narratives, as she writes in her introduction:

> My focus on discursive colonization, in contrast [to Said's Orientalism], apprehends this discursive construction in its process of becoming, and thus captures moments of internal inconsistency and contestation when there was no certainty that the colonial paradigm would ever achieve an authoritative position as institutionalized knowledge. Discursive colonization thus describes a time when colonial definitions, meanings, and identities were contested and susceptible to defeat by competing discourses.[39]

Moreover, whereas Kopp's insistence on the developmental focus of her approach, which concentrates on early stages of the colonial paradigm's establishment, safeguards the recognition of what Foucault refers to as "subjugated knowledge,"[40] Czapliński grants literature a special status in its production of narratives capable of drawing dominant political discourses into question:

> Now, at the end of the twenty-first century's second decade, politicians are talking about sovereignty, as if this did not call for a newly devised map. In contrast to these politicians, writers are seeking out ties beyond political agreements and trade deals, and the fundamental question they are posing concerns the possibility of creating connections. […] Literature does not trust platitudes but rather questions them. It involves readers in the experience of a crisis of orientation, and by establishing new coordinates and putting the map of Central Europe into motion, it forces us to exercise our geographical imagination.[41]

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[39] Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 9.

[40] "I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand [...] a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy [...] and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge (*le savoir des gens*) though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes it force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it [...]." Foucault's subsequent definition of subjugated knowledges as "minor knowledges, as Deleuze might call them," making reference to Deleuze's *Kafka: Pour une Littérature Mineure* published the previous year, suggests that Foucault could be thinking of literature here as well. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," trans. Kate Soper, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 82; 85.

[41] "[P]olitycy schyłku drugiej dekady XXI wieku mówią o suwerenności, jakby nie wymagało to wymyślenia mapy na nowo. W odróżnieniu od nich pisarze szukają powiązań poza umowami politycznymi i handlowymi, a zasadnicze pytanie, które stawiają […,] dotyczy możliwości stwarzania połączeń. […] Nie zawierza [literatura] oczywistościom, lecz je kwestionuje. Wciąga czytelników w doświadczenie kryzysu orientacji, a ustalając nowe współrzędne i wprawiając w ruch środkowoeuropejską mapę, zmusza naszą geograficzną wyobraźnię do wysiłku." Przemysław Czapliński, *Poruszona mapa*, 8. In her dissertation, Christine Kenison applies a similar understanding of individual works as "crises of orientation" to novels that Kopp reads in a broader, discourse-analytical vein. For instance, while she takes into account Kopp's taxonomical treatment of the *Ostmarkenroman* genre as a whole, Kenison's reading of *Das schlafende Heer*, Clara Viebig's *Ostmarkenroman* from 1904, draws attention to the work's internal contradictions and the meta-commentary provided by its experimentation with perspective: "The novel's constant

This dissertation takes Kopp's and Czapliński's analyses as models for its probing of literary counter-narratives written against the grain of the prevailing political, social, and cultural discourses from the first two decades of the Cold War. In limiting its historical scope to the first two decades of the Cold War, a timeframe defined roughly by the U.S.'s unveiling of the Truman Doctrine in 1947 and the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 by the U.S., U.K., and U.S.S.R., it confines itself to an early period of the Cold War during which the post-Yalta division of the globe was in the process of being established by way of politics, trade, and culture, among other means. Furthermore, its investigation into the interaction between the political-geographical conditions of the early Cold War and the formal qualities of the literary texts discussed explicitly addresses literature's unique role as a mode of writing that self-reflexively draws attention to the constructedness of borders and boundaries of various kinds.

As already mentioned, the chapters of this dissertation will discuss the writings of Uwe Johnson, Arno Schmidt, and Zbigniew Herbert regarding how they respond to the division of Europe into two separate spheres following the Second World War. Each chapter will take as its focal point a single work by one of these authors: *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, *Das steinerne Herz*, and *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, respectively. Though the interpretation of these texts will draw on other writings from these authors' oeuvres, the majority of the analysis will be devoted to close readings of individual passages from the works above. The purpose of these readings will be to highlight the authors' unique employment of literary devices like metaphor and ekphrasis, their adoption and manipulation of genres such as satire and the essay, and their juxtaposition of various

shifts in perspective, between Germans and Poles and between internal and external narration, expose the central conflict of *Das schlafende Heer* as friction between competing methods of narrating the ambiguity and ambivalence of Posen, rather than simply a contest between Germans and Poles." Christine M. Kenison, "Bestselling Borders: The Mutual Implications of German and Polish Identity in the Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Novel" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University, 2017), 120-1, ProQuest.

languages and discourses in an attempt to stage the border-crossing portrayed in the content at the level of the texts' formal features. In this regard, this dissertation represents an attempt to comprehend the following claim made by Uwe Johnson in his essay "Berliner Stadtbahn," analyzed at length in the following chapter: "Eine Grenze an dieser Stelle wirkt wie eine literarische Kategorie. Sie verlangt die epische Technik und die Sprache zu verändern [...]." (BS, 10) Within this specific context, Johnson's statement implies that the existence of checkpoints between the Eastern and Western zones of the city, of obstructions that slow movement between its halves to a halt, calls for the appropriate alteration of traditional means of narrating. Though each of these authors deals with various portions of the "systems border" between East and West in distinct ways, all of them take these borders as opportunities to craft their own unique forms of storytelling and reflect on the mapmaking functions of literature, the ways that it contributes to the construction of both mental and official maps as well as the demarcation of boundaries between states, communities, and peoples.[42]

**IV. The Early Cold War**

Already in the early 1940s, the Polish essayist Jerzy Stempowski was considering the monumental changes to the European order wrought by the Second World War and its inestimable displacement of peoples, as he wrote in a letter to friend in May of 1941:

[42] The term "systems border" is taken from Joachim Becker and Andrea Komlosy, who use it to designate the Cold War borders between East and West. According to the authors, it is distinct from other geopolitical borders in that it is both transnational and undergirded by an ideological division. Joachim Becker & Andrea Komlosy, "Vorwort," in *Grenzen weltweit: Zonen, Linien, Mauern im historischen Vergleich*, ed. Joachim Becker & Andrea Komlosy (Vienna: Promedia Verlag, 2004), 4. At the same time, however, it is crucial to emphasize that there was no single, continuous border running between the Eastern and Western blocs, but rather a series of border segments that ultimately formed a "multiplex border-line." Andrea Komlosy, "The Marshall Plan and the Making of the 'Iron Curtain' in Austria," in *The Marshall Plan in Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, & Dieter Stiefel (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000), 99; see also Yuliya Komska, *The Icon Curtain*, 9. Each of these segments must therefore be treated on its own terms (i.e., in consideration of its specific character and history) and as part of an overarching border regime.

> In Germany today, around 5 million foreigners are working as laborers and joyfully greeting every air raid by the Royal Air Force. In the famous concentration camp in Oświęcim, they have enlarged the barracks to house newly arrived Italian anti-fascists, whom the German police arrested in their country and transported to Poland. This process is in full development and will assume even greater dimensions up until the war's end. It is difficult even to imagine what the continent will look like in two years, populated by 400 million beggars bickering everywhere over land and soil and nationally disarrayed in a manner similar to Soviet Russia and Siberia. Our political ideas from 1939 will hardly apply to this situation. Instead, the United States might be a closer model. At any rate, we will have to wait and see...[43]

Ultimately, of course, the postwar order was quite different than what Stempowski had imagined; his vision of territorial disputes was likely informed by the writer's memory and representations of the period immediately after World War I, during which the collapse of various multi-ethnic empires resulted in the rapid and often violent establishment of nation-states throughout Central Europe from 1917 to 1923.[44] What Stempowski was likely incapable of imagining in 1941 was the degree to which the war would undermine the authority and influence of European states and the extent to which outside powers like Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States would determine postwar borders on the European continent. All three of these powers were intent on reaching diplomatic compromises that, first and foremost, secured Europe against German

[43] "W Niemczech jest dziś około 5 milionów cudzoziemców, pracujących jako robotnicy i witających radośnie każdy nalot RAF. W sławnym obozie koncentracyjnym w Oświęcimiu rozszerzono baraki i przywieziono Włochów antyfaszystów, aresztowanych w swym kraju przez policję niemiecką i wywiezionych aż do Polski. Ten proces jest w pełnym rozwoju i do końca wojny przybierze jeszcze rozmiary. Trudno sobie nawet wyobrazić, jak ten kontynent będzie wyglądał za dwa lata, zaludniony przez 400 milionów żebraków, czepiających się wszędzie roli, ziemi i przemieszanych pod względem narodowym tak samo jak w Rosji sowieckiej czy na Syberii. Nasze pojęcia polityczne z 1939 będą mało pasowały do tego stanu rzeczy. Raczej Stany Zjednoczone mogą być bliższym wzorem. Zresztą jeszcze zobaczymy…" Jerzy Stempowski, "Z listów do Krystyny Marek" [From letters to Krystna Marek], in *Niemcy. Tom II: 1940-1965* [Germany. Volume II: 1940-1965], ed. Magdalena Chabiera (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2018), 33.

[44] Within Poland alone, this period was characterized by disputes between those who wished to include minorities (a recently invented concept) within the sovereign bounds of the Second Polish Republic—an idea promoted by Józef Piłsudski—or draw state borders around a single ethnic group, as advocated by members of the political movement *Narodowa Demokracja* (National Democracy) like Roman Dmowski. See Omer Bartov & Eric D. Weitz, "Introduction," in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov & Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 5.

irredentism.[45] Nevertheless, this short passage demonstrates the early recognition among writers and intellectuals of the need for an adequate means of representing the new European order following the previous one's collapse at the war's outset. And in the domain of literature, at least, this desire for an authoritative symbolic geography did not dissipate with Churchill's coinage of the Iron Curtain in 1946. Indeed, in his diaries from his postwar travels through Italy, published in the Polish émigré journal *Kultura* (Culture) in 1948, Stempowski emphatically (and satirically) critiques the concept and its attribution to the Soviets: "Iron drapes are an invention older than Stalin and Molotov. [...] The source of iron curtains lies in the mentality and ideas of Anglo-Saxons, foreigners to a Europe where at all times, since the Greeks and Romans and even before them, much traveling was done."[46] Like Koeppen, Stempowski, whose travelogues were a mainstay of *Kultura* until his death in 1969, presents travel and travel writing as a tool for dismantling the presumably "Anglo-Saxon" invention of the Iron Curtain.[47] And his reference to an ancient European tradition resembles Iwaszkiewicz's endeavor to locate a cultural substrate providing for an exchange of ideas between the Eastern and Western Blocs.

The timespan at the center of this dissertation, the approximately twenty-year period between 1947 and 1968, contains an abundance of literary, philosophical, filmic, and artistic attempts to produce mental maps and narratives that both supplement and subvert dominant political-geographical paradigms. Literary texts like those of Iwaszkiewicz and Stempowski that leveraged an ancient European tradition in the face of Cold War cultural divisions had their

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[45] Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), 118-9.

[46] "Żelazne zasłony są wynalazkiem starszym od Stalina i Mołotowa. […] Źródło żelaznych kurtyn leży w umysłowości i pojęciach anglosaskich, obcych Europie, gdzie za wszystkich czasów od Greków i Rzymian, a nawet przed nimi – wiele podróżowano." Jerzy Stempowski, "*Corona turrita* (z dziennika podróży do Włoch)", in *Po powodzi: Eseje i dzienniki podróży*, ed. Magdalena Chabiera (Paris: Instytut Literacki Kultura, 2015), 105.

[47] Even a cursory glance at the list of authors and intellectuals treated in Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe* makes it clear that the "source" of the Iron Curtain hardly lay exclusively in Great Britain.

counterparts in the theoretical writings of Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, who themselves disagreed over the basis of the presumably transhistorical *Welt-Gegensatz* between East and West.[48] For poets like Ingeborg Bachmann and Czesław Miłosz, on the other hand, previously multi-ethnic and multi-denominational states like the Austrian Empire and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth served as historical models for a continent-wide dialogue overstepping ideological, national, and supra-national boundaries.[49] Concerning the German-German divide, which often served as a microcosm for the larger postwar order, authors from both sides of the inner German border contributed to the description, and thereby the construction, of inter-German relations during the fifties and sixties.[50] Even the occasional sci-fi novel like Ernst Jünger's *Heliopolis* and Arno Schmidt's *Die Gelehrtenrepublik* depicted fantastical imaginative geographies that shed light on the real political-geographical status quo of the early Cold War era.[51]

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[48] Whereas Jünger perceived the source of the Cold War bifurcation of the globe in the existence of two fundamental human dispositions with corresponding forms of governance, Schmitt identified two distinct forms of terrain (i.e., land and sea) as the underlying basis of the division. See Ernst Jünger, "Der gordische Knoten," in *Betrachtungen zur Zeit*, vol. 9 of *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2015), 375-479; Carl Schmitt, "Die geschichtliche Struktur des heutigen Welt-Gegensatzes von Ost und West. Bemerkungen zu Ernst Jüngers Schrift: 'Der Gordische Knoten'," in *Staat, Großraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969*, ed. Günter Maschke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), 523-551.

[49] Ingeborg Bachmann, "Böhmen liegt am Meer," in *Sämtliche Gedichte* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2016), PDF e-book; Czesław Miłosz, "Narodowości" [Nations], in *Rodzinna Europa* [Home Europe] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001), 105-123.

[50] Authors published in the Federal Republic included: Alfred Andersch (*Ein Liebhaber des Halbschattens*, 1963), Uwe Johnson (*Mutmassungen über Jakob*, 1959; *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, 1961; *Zwei Ansichten*, 1965); Hans Erich Nossack (*Der jüngere Bruder*, 1958); and Arno Schmidt (*Das steinerne Herz*, 1955). Authors published in the German Democratic Republic included: Jurij Brežan (*Eine Liebesgeschichte*, 1962); Fritz Rudolf Fries (*Der Weg nach Oobliadooh*, 1966); Dieter Noll (*Die Abenteuer des Werner Holt*, 1960 & 1963); Brigitte Reimann (*Die Geschwister*, 1963); and Christa Wolf (*Der geteilte Himmel*, 1963).

[51] For more on *Die Gelehrtenrepublik* as an imaginative corrective to the Cold War political-geographical order, see Xan Holt, "Intertextuelle Zwischenräume: Der Hominidenstreifen als Heterotopie in Arno Schmidts *Gelehrtenrepublik*," *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft der Arno-Schmidt-Leser 2017* (2020), 93-108.

Like the borders addressed in this dissertation, the contours around the period covered could have been drawn differently. As already stated, this time period begins with the unveiling of the Truman Doctrine in 1947, which set the foreign policy agenda of 'containment' for the West, and ends with the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968, a multilateral agreement that stabilized to some degree diplomatic relations between the two blocs.[52] The decision to bookend the period in question with events where neither of the two German states nor Poland were directly involved is a deliberate one. More traditionally significant dates for works of German and Polish history such as 1949 (the creation of the two German states), 1956 (the Thaw and the Polish October), and 1961 (the construction of the Berlin wall) had the disadvantage of privileging one national or regional convention of periodization over another.[53] And considering the international cultural and political upheavals that occurred in 1968, with a wave of protests that stretched from Prague to Berkeley, this year serves as something of a meeting point for Eastern and Western historical narratives. Nevertheless, this date is by no means meant to serve as a hard boundary. Literary works from the FRG, the GDR, and the PRL that explored, undergirded, and offset the postwar division of Europe continued to be published until the Cold War's end, and even after.[54] Indeed, in the case of Zbigniew Herbert, this dissertation will draw upon some works that

[52] This effects of this "stabilization" could be observed merely five weeks later when 500,000 Warsaw Pact troops marched into Czechoslovakia with little to no protest from the United States. Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 444.

[53] Influential works of English-language history whose periodization hinges on such dates include: Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944-1956* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012); Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014: The Divided Nation*, 4th ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2015).

[54] Matthew Miller's *The German Epic in the Cold War*, for instance, discusses three German works published after 1961 that provide the reader with ideological and geographical "orientation" in the increasingly global Cold War world. Matthew Miller, *The German Epic in the Cold War: Peter Weiss, Uwe Johnson, and Alexander Kluge* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 8-9. One could make the case, as Miller's periodization suggests, that literary works published in the seventies and eighties are increasingly preoccupied with the global order in a manner that shifts the geographical focus away from the European continent. For Uwe Johnson and Arno Schmidt, 1970 serves as a watershed moment as it marks the publication date of the works that are traditionally read as signaling the onset of their "late" work: *Jahrestage* and *Zettels Traum*, respectively. See Norbert Mecklenburg, *Die Erzählkunst*

appeared in the seventies, eighties, and nineties in order to closely examine the unique role of the traveler in the author's oeuvre. The purpose of the predetermined twenty-year timespan is to concentrate the focus of the analysis on a period during which political and cultural discourses around the division of Europe were in a process of development and were therefore open to a wider degree of variation and contestation than one might perceive in later decades. In her treatment of history of the two German states, for instance, Mary Fulbrook has argued that the 1970s signaled the beginning of a "'normalization' of relations" between the FRG and the GDR, which was in part undergirded by the assumption of the two states' distinct national identities.[55] In this regard, the following dissertation takes a similar approach as Kristin Kopp in her concentration on an epoch of discursive consolidation. At the same time, however, in its insistence and focus on the counter-discursive capacities of literature, this dissertation offers a method of analysis that can be applied to works staging similar border-crossings between Eastern and Western Europe before, during, or after the Cold War, as will be discussed further in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

*Uwe Johnsons:* Jahrestage *und andere Prosa* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 14; Rüdiger Zymer, "'Ein großer Mann, der Jean Paul!' Jean Paul bei Arno Schmidt," in *Arno Schmidt und das 18. Jahrhundert*, ed. Hans-Edwin Friedrich (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2017), 222.

[55] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918-2014*, 237.

## CHAPTER ONE

## The Text as a Border Station

## Uwe Johnson's *Das dritte Buch über Achim*

### I. A Writer of Neither Germany

The significance of Uwe Johnson's work for an analysis of the interaction between Cold War borders and literature appears indisputable in light of his designation as the postwar period's sole *gesamtdeutscher Dichter* and as the *Dichter der beiden Deutschland*.[56] Though intended as praise, these coinages by West German critics allegedly contributed to the author's decision to leave Europe and take up residence in New York from 1966 to 1968. As Johnson indicated in his lectures at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, delivered in 1979 and published a year later as *Begleitumstände*, the broader timespan of his *Jahrestage* tetralogy and the relocation of his protagonist Gesine from the Federal Republic to North America in part grew out of the author's wish to shake off these critically and ideologically suspect labels:

> Das Etikett »Dichter der beiden Deutschland« oder »der deutschen Teilung«, dessen der Kritiker als einer Prothese für Erinnerung und Urteil bedarf, hält ihn von vornherein davon ab, ein anderes Zentrum in einer literarischen Arbeit zu vermuten als eben jenes, an das er gewöhnt ist bis zur Süchtigkeit. […] Zum vierten Mal eingesperrt in die Phrase des Gesamtdeutschen, wird einer die Flucht versuchen dürfen. Muss es gleich sechstausend Kilometer weit weg sein? (*BU*, 394-6)

In a similar vein, scholars have interpreted the portrayal of seemingly irreconcilable German-German relations in *Zwei Ansichten* as a response to critics who had read a conciliatory tone into *Das dritte Buch*, in which a West German journalist unsuccessfully tries his hand at the biography

[56] Katja Leuchtenberger, *Uwe Johnson* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2010), 30.

of an East German athlete-cum-politician.[57] It was this presumed air of rapprochement that had led to Johnson's treatment by critics and readers as a literary mediator between the two estranged German states.

As Johnson hints in the passage above, the themes of his works are manifold, and to reduce his literary ambitions to the repeated probing of a single subject would be undeserved. Nevertheless, much of Johnson's early career was devoted to examining the differences—not necessarily the similarities or overlaps—between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany, to scrutinizing the political, cultural, and psychological distance between East and West Germany. Indeed, the final sentence of *Das dritte Buch*, though admittedly spoken by the narrator rather than Johnson himself, suggests this position: "Die Ereignisse beziehen sich nicht auf ähnliche sondern auf die Grenze: den Unterschied: die Entfernung […]." (*DBA*, 301) To Johnson, the difference between the German states is bound up with the figure of the border, a multivalent and even contradictory topographical structure that one can trace through the author's entire oeuvre, not only in its concrete manifestations as inner German border and Berlin Wall, but also as part of a palpable ideological reality with considerable effects on the discursive practices of the author's historical moment. Even in the first two volumes of *Jahrestage*, which make less frequent mention of the Eastern Bloc than his early works, and in later texts like *Eine Reise nach Klagenfurt* and *Skizze eines Verunglückten*, one cannot overlook the contours of a literary style that Johnson had constructed in response to the postwar delimitation of separate spheres of influence. Though the author later construed the first volumes of his tetralogy as an escape from the dreaded *Phrase des Gesamtdeutschen*, the play of narrative perspective, the often

[57] See Greg Bond, "'Die Großen des Landes warfen ein Auge auf Jakob.' Uwe Johnsons *Mutmassungen über Jakob*," *Treibhaus. Jahrbuch für die Literatur der fünfziger Jahre* 5 (2009), 144-162.

frustrated mediation of past and present experiences, and the satirical appropriation of ideologically infused doublespeak belong to a poetics of the border formulated most explicitly and succinctly in his writings from the late fifties and early sixties.

This is not to say that *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, along with the contemporaneously conceived essay "Berliner Stadtbahn (veraltet)," can stand in for Johnson's entire body of work. Each of his texts features a distinct style and tone, altered in each instance with an eye to the work's content and moment of production. Nevertheless, the metapoetic quality so typical of Johnson's style emerges most plainly in *Das dritte Buch*. The novel is written from the perspective of a writer-narrator, one who openly ruminates in frequent asides over the best means of conveying their biographical material to the reader. Johnson's original title for the piece, though rejected by his publisher Siegfried Unseld, was *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*.[58] The title not only awakens the reader to the text's self-reflexivity, it presents the work as a formal deliberation over one of the fundamental tenets of critical realism as expounded by Georg Lukács in his essay *Erzählen oder Beschreiben*, which Johnson scholar Wolfgang Strehlow summarizes as follows: "»Beschreiben« hieß für Lukács immer 'Oberflächenbehandlung' statt 'Wesensgestaltung' und sollte einem Romanschriftsteller nicht unterkommen."[59] Frequently serving as a normative standard that the author could in equal parts appropriate and undermine, Lukács' aesthetic theory

[58] An alternative recommendation by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, mentioned to Johnson by Unseld in a letter from May 10, 1961, seems particularly noteworthy within the context of this dissertation: "Ich selbst könnte mich mit Ihrem Vorschlag »das dritte Buch über Achim« wenn nicht befreunden, so doch an ihn gewöhnen. Die Herren Boehlich und Enzensberger sind strikt gegen diesen Titel. Nun hat Enzensberger einen Vorschlag gemacht, den ich sehr gute finde und dem wir alle hier zustimmen:

»Achim oder Die Grenze«
Beschreibung einer Beschreibung.

Wir diskutieren auch noch einen anderen Titel »Nachrichten über Achim«, aber hier passt eben nicht der Untertitel [...]." (*BU*, 175).

[59] Wolfgang Strehlow, *Ästhetik des Widerspruchs. Versuche über Uwe Johnsons dialektische Schreibweise* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1993), 186.

would continue to preoccupy Johnson until his death. The Hungarian philosopher's 1951 essay on Theodor Fontane published in *Sinn und Form* makes an appearance in the final volume of *Jahrestage*.[60] Furthermore, the Lukácsian struggle—though consistently thwarted in Johnson's texts—to pierce the surface of everyday existence in search of underlying root causes can be perceived throughout the latter's body of work.

This chapter will focus predominantly on *Das dritte Buch über Achim* in exploring the thematic and poetological significance of the border in Johnson's writing. It will begin by historically and biographically contextualizing the difficult text, thereby gaining a more concrete understanding of the political balancing act that not only influenced the image of the author in public life but also informed his method of narrative composition. The analysis will then proceed to a close reading of the author's programmatic essay "Berliner Stadtbahn," which was written while Johnson was completing *Das dritte Buch über Achim* and which scholars have interpreted as a summation of his early style that is grounded in the political particularities of his moment.[61] However, though "Berliner Stadtbahn" treats many of the literary techniques either explicitly thematized or formally employed in *Das dritte Buch*, such as skepticism toward Balzacian omniscience and a practice of Brechtian citational montage, the essay will not be used as a mere road map to his preceding novel. Rather, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, although published prior, arguably expands upon the narrative and poetic methods developed over against the geopolitical schism and the ideological binary described in "Berliner Stadtbahn." In this sense, the figure of the border, which materializes on the first page of *Das dritte Buch* in the form of the inner German

[60] "Was Lockenvitz anbrachte [...] war eine Zeitschrift aus der halben Hauptstadt, mit farbiger Bauchbinde, Form hieß sie, oder Sinn, die Botschaft der ostdeutschen Staatskultur an den Rest der Welt, darin schrieb der amtierende Fachmann für sozialistische Theorie in der Literatur, Heft 2, Seite 44-93 über Fontantes »Schach von Wuthenow« [...]." Uwe Johnson, *Jahrestage*, vol. 4 (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2013), 1530.

[61] See Matthew D. Miller, *The German Epic in the Cold War. Peter Weiss, Uwe Johnson, and Alexander Kluge* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2018), 12-13.

demarcation line, becomes the virtual nucleus around which the thematic and formal concerns of the novel cluster. The analysis of the novel will make clear the manner in which Johnson, while always keeping in mind the material, ideological, and aesthetic schisms between the two German states, employs a particular type of literary form and language in order to simultaneously acknowledge and overcome these gaps. In the final analysis, Johnson's style and composition constitutes a poetics of difference that offers a means of establishing common ground between the disparate worldviews and ways of life embodied in the Cold War-era East and West.

## II. Balancing Acts between East and West

Border-crossing was an act in which Uwe Johnson could claim a good deal of personal experience. Like the protagonist of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, who starts the novel by entering the GDR and concludes it with his return to the Federal Republic, Johnson performed numerous easterly and westerly border-crossings throughout his life. Born on the Baltic Coast in 1934, in the Pomeranian town of Cammin (present-day Poland's Kamień Pomorski), Johnson and his family fled west during the final year of World War II in an attempt to evade the oncoming Red Army, ultimately finding shelter with relatives in the rural town of Rechnitz in the province of Mecklenburg.[62] As Mecklenburg fell within the boundaries of the Soviet Occupation Zone, and in 1949 became part of the newly established German Democratic Republic, Johnson received the kind of propaganda-laden schooling typical of the Soviet-controlled People's Republics in their early years, depicted in detail in the author's posthumously published *Ingrid Babendererde*. Following his expulsion from the University of Rostock, a consequence of his support for the outlawed Protestant youth organization *Die Junge Gemeinde*, and his subsequent re-enrollment after the People's Uprising

[62] Katja Leuchtenberger, *Uwe Johnson*, 9-11.

of 1953, Johnson transferred to the University of Leipzig.[63] Here he received his training in German philology under the renowned literary critic Hans Mayer and the utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch, both notable influences on his later work. Though his mother fled to West Berlin in 1956, Johnson remained in the German Democratic Republic until 1959, the same year that the illustrious West German publishing house Suhrkamp Verlag put out his first published novel *Mutmassungen über Jakob*. The novel to be discussed, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, was written shortly after Johnson's move to West Berlin and, in a sense, the feeling of foreignness the West German protagonist experiences during his brief foray into the German Democratic Republic could be read as a fictional recasting of the author's own sense of alienation in the capitalist West.

To return to the epithets mentioned in this chapter's opening, the inaccessibility of the author's published works for citizens of the GDR naturally draws his description as a *gesamtdeutscher Dichter* into question. Johnson himself says as much in his Frankfurt lectures: "Allenfalls hätte der Titel sich hinnehmen lassen, wäre er zugetroffen in der Hinsicht, dass die Arbeiten des so Betroffenen in dem einen Teil Deutschlands von den Lesern geprüft werden durften wie in dem anderen." (*BU*, 336-7) Furthermore, this label applied by West German critics was not as innocent as it may have initially appeared. In the same lectures, Johnson points to the diplomatic stratagem behind the term, citing, among other things, a statement by Konrad Adenauer himself, the first Chancellor of the German Federal Republic:

> Was östlich von der Elbe und Werra liegt, sind Deutschlands unerlöste Provinzen. Daher heisst die Aufgabe nicht Wiedervereinigung, sondern Befreiung. [...] Das Wort Wiedervereinigung sollte endlich verschwinden, es hat schon zuviel Unheil angerichtet. »Befreiung« sei die Parole. (Konrad Adenauer, in: Rheinischer Merkur, Köln 20. Juli 1952). (*BU*, 340)

[63] Ibid., 16-19.

Johnson lifts this citation from a conservative West German weekly in order to suggest the nefarious political intent beneath his West German critics' assertions. In fact, in private correspondence with a group of school children from Vigneux, Johnson highlights what he sees as the one-sided, strictly political nature of reunification: "[D]ie mir bekannten Bürger der D.D.R. sehnen sich nicht nach einer Vereinigung mit der westdeutschen Republik; zwar würden sie die kapitalistische Variante Deutschlands gern einmal besuchen und besichtigen, dann aber zurückgehen wollen in ihren eigenen Staat."[64] Similarly to the protagonist Karsch from *Das dritte Buch*, who sees his biographical project drawn under the influence of censors from the GDR's ruling party, Johnson experiences his labelling as a *gesamtdeutscher Dichter* as an attempt at cooptation by the West German political realm; as he writes in "Berliner Stadtbahn": "[Der Verfasser] fängt einfach an. Dann wird er zum Sprecher eines Personenkreises, der ihn nicht beauftragt hat. Oder man hält ihn dafür." (BS, 13) In a similar fashion, when his reviewers extol what they see as the author's demonstrations of cultural, psychological, or moral correspondences between the two German nations, Johnson perceives these accolades as ideological assertions offered either unwittingly or in bad faith. By indicating the presumed political underpinnings of these statements, he simultaneously highlights the degree to which such seemingly harmless epithets rely on a rejection of national, political, and ideological difference, in contrast to the harmonious sentiment they appear to convey.

The more seemingly benign designation *Dichter der beiden Deutschland* also assumes the possibility of uniting these two vastly distinct states under a single creative subject. After being labeled as such in a critique of *Zwei Ansichten* that was published in the tellingly entitled journal

[64] Uwe Johnson, "»Wiedervereinigung«. Frage von Schülerinnen aus Vigneux vom 7.5. 1974. Antwort vom 17.5.1974," in: *»Ich überlege mir die Geschichte...«. Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, ed. Eberhard Fahlke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 155.

*Die Literatur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Johnson not only rejects it as a reductive ideological brand; he even goes so far as to question its conditions of possibility by highlighting the diverse range of identities to be found within each of the two German states. Since the reviewer in question also interpreted the novel's two central characters as allegorical stand-ins for their respective German states, Johnson responds by highlighting the intrinsic heterogeneity of the FRG and the GDR:

> Auf die bloss verbale statt analytische Wiederholung erprobte Krücke gestützt, unterstellt [der Kritiker] dem Urheber jener »Zwei Ansichten« das wahnwitzig vermessene Unterfangen, in einer einzigen Person die Identität eines ganzen Landes (mit unterschiedlichen Klimazonen, Mundarten, Wirtschaftsstrukturen etc.) zusammenzubündeln." (*BU*, 394)

Thus, *Dichter der beiden Deutschland* would have to be reformulated as 'poet of Mecklenburg, Saxony, Bavaria, Baden, etc.'—a seemingly absurd designation when taking into account the divergent political and religious histories, cultures, and dialects of these distinct regions. Dialect, which holds a particularly significant place in Johnson's body of work, would alone suffice to splinter the already modestly sized East German state into numerous linguistic microstates, so to speak. Fascinated by and wishing to underscore such local peculiarities, Johnson readily integrates various German dialects into his writings. In both *Mutmassungen über Jakob* and *Jahrestage*, for instance, Heinrich Cresspahl's internal monologues and spoken dialogue are largely transmitted in Mecklenburgisch, and his daughter Gesine partially attributes her early feelings of estrangement from Jakob's mother to the latter's Pomeranian dialect, which belongs to the dialect group arguably closest to Gesine's native Mecklenburgisch: "das pommersche Platt spricht sich sehr anders aus als das mecklenburgische und hat auch eigene Wörter, die verstand [Gesine] nicht alle."[65] Perceived in this light, the possibility of a single author bridging a large-scale social and political

[65] Uwe Johnson, *Mutmassungen über Jakob* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), 17-8.

gap between two nations with their own internal obstacles to communication and cultural continuity becomes all the more suspect. In effect, Johnson responds to what he sees as calls for West German expansion, frequently cloaked as humanitarian appeals for rapprochement or re-unification, with principles of pluralism, diversity, and respect for alterity. As briefly indicated above, and as will be demonstrated in what follows, this pluralistic political doctrine, cast into sharp relief by the geopolitical tensions of the era, exerts an enormous influence on Johnson's unique manner of representation.

### III. Aesthetics Consequences of Cold War Borders

In "Berliner Stadtbahn," Johnson isolates a number of extraordinary contemporary incidents that, according to him, demand a transformation in the previously accepted mode of representation. For instance, he refers to the unique circumstance in which the passenger of a commuter train can shuttle back and forth between two ideologically hostile nations in a matter of minutes, a singular situation that calls for an equally unique mode of description:

> Wenn diese Zustände ihren eigenen Begriff verlangen dürfen, so nicht, weil sie pittoresk und intensiv wären, sondern weil sie die Grenze der geteilten Welt darstellen: die Grenze zwischen den beiden Ordnungen, nach denen heute in der Welt gelebt werden kann. […] Dies ist nicht nur eine Rechtfertigung des Themas. Eine Grenze an dieser Stelle wirkt wie eine literarische Kategorie. Sie verlangt die epische Technik und die Sprache zu verändern, bis sie der unerhörten Situation gerecht werden. (BS, 10)

The conditions referred to here, in which two opposing world orders exist side by side, are clearly the political-geographical circumstances of the early Cold War. With regard to the border specifically, the material borders at the center of "Berliner Stadtbahn" are the sector borders between East and West Berlin, which at the time of this essay's composition in March of 1961 were still permeable, though well regulated. The overnight construction of the Berlin wall on August 13 of the same year, which enclosed West Berlin on all sides and transformed it into a kind

of enclave within the German Democratic Republic, later prompted Johnson to add the italicized parenthetical "(*veraltet*)" to the essay's title. But the retrospective addition of this modifier hardly implies an unhampered fluidity of transit between the city's two halves prior to the wall's construction. As Johnson asserts in the passage above, the hardening or, as he puts it elsewhere, *Verhornung* of formerly porous national frontiers following the war and the establishment of the two German states necessarily call for an overhaul of conventional narrative form. (BS, 8) The first of these, already mentioned above, is the complication and rupture of simple narrative continuity and signification, an extension of the modernist project realized in the novels of Alfred Döblin and Thomas Mann, to provide two examples of German authors whose work influenced Johnson considerably.[66] In Johnson's case, however, the extra-literary justification for such experimentation appears more politically specific and materially concrete than that of his predecessors.

As has been noted elsewhere, Johnson's novelistic technique represents an extension of the crisis of storytelling characteristic of early twentieth century literature, specifically as regards a distinctly modernist break with presumably outdated conceptions of epic cohesion.[67] In fact, the essay presumably grew out of an unsuccessful attempt to build a straightforward train station sequence in an ultimately aborted "epic text"[68]:

> Erlauben Sie mir, unter diesem Titel zu berichten über einige Schwierigkeiten, die mich hinderten einen Stadtbahnhof in Berlin zu beschreiben. Da tritt unter vielen anderen eine einzelne Person aus dem eingefahrenen Zug, überschreitet den Bahnsteig und verläßt ihn zur Straße hin. Dieser Vorgang bleibt sich ähnlich, so oft er vorkommt […]. Bei der Arbeit

[66] See Jochen Hörisch, "Anniversaries and the Revival of Storytelling," in *A New History of German Literature*, ed. David Wellbery et al. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 2004), 932–936.

[67] See Matthew Miller, *The German Epic in the Cold War*, 8-18.

[68] In the margins of a typoscript of this essay, Johnson penned the following note beside the word *Schwierigkeiten*: "Die brachte ich nicht zusammen, und ein Buch über Berlin habe ich noch nicht angefangen." Uwe Johnson, *Berliner Stadtbahn* [The Berlin Border of the Divided World as a Place of Writing], 03.14.1961-03.23.1981. Uwe Johnson-Archiv Rostock [Depositum der Johannes und Annitta Fries Stiftung], UJA/H/000466, Mappe 1, Bl. 1.

> an einem größeren epischen Text wurde eine Episode benötigt, die den Zusammenhang unterbrach. Vier verbundene Sätze sollten lediglich quantitativ auftreten, etwas anderes sein, eine Pause bewirken. Dafür war der angedeutete Vorgang ausgewählt. Er fügte sich weder in einen langen noch in vier kurze Sätze vom erwünschten Umfang, also wurde er ausgewechselt gegen einen anderen Anlass, der dieselbe Wirkung tat. Nach einiger Zeit war es aber ärgerlich, daß diese einfache Bahnhofsszene nicht für den Namen Berlin hatte stehen wollen, und ich versuchte mit ihr eine Geschichte: eine Beschreibung für sie allein. Damit gab es Schwierigkeiten. (BS, 7)

The value in such a scene, according to Johnson, is to be found in its familiarity to the reader, which is to say its communicability, its capacity to be clearly conveyed to a broad and diverse reading public. The arrival at the train station should signify the city of Berlin as cleanly and translucently as Berlin itself should connote all other metropolitan areas: "Der Anblick ist nicht kompliziert. In zutreffende Worte gesetzt sollte er verständlich und beiläufig wirken auf jedermann, der über Anschauung oder Erfahrung für den Begriff Groß-Stadt verfügt." (BS, 8) But the arriving train and the alighting passenger no longer stand for Berlin, which is to say that Berlin, or rather the proper noun 'Berlin,' no longer fits the definition of a metropolis. By way of explanation, Johnson enumerates the characteristic components of a stereotypical metropolis: a substantial mass of buildings, institutions, and infrastructure settled adjacent to one another; an extended network of connections that lead out of the city and extend into the surrounding areas; a dense web of individual actions and movements that converge around a single point, and the various modes of transportation that enable these paths. (BS, 7)

Considering the overarching importance of motility to these defining terms, it is hardly surprising that the one element capable of dislodging Berlin from its status as a metropolis would be the one that brought all of this movement to a halt and severed the interconnections both within and outside the city:

> Die Grenze zerlegt den Begriff [der Groß-Stadt]. Sie kann nicht als Kenntnis vorausgesetzt werden. […] Es gibt nicht: Berlin. Es sind zwei Städte Berlin, die nach der bebauten Fläche und der Einwohnerzahl vergleichbar sind. Berlin zu sagen ist vage und vielmehr eine

> politische Forderung, wie die östliche und westliche Staatenkoalition sie seit einiger Zeit aufstellen, indem sie der von ihnen beeinflußten Hälfte den Namen des ganzen Gebietes geben als sie die andere nicht vorhanden oder bereits in der eigenen enthalten. Die juristischen Unterschiede, die nun anzuführen wären, können in einer so ungenauen Bezeichnung nicht deutlich werden. (BS, 8–9)

Just as it cuts off lines of transportation and communication between the two halves of the city, the demarcation line running through Berlin bisects the act of signification described above, driving a wedge between author and reader. Here Johnson nods to some of the major aesthetic procedures invoked and explicitly addressed in *Das dritte Buch*, such as *Vergleichbarkeit*, *Unterschiede*, and *Genauigkeit*. As the passage suggests, the ostensible similarity between the two Berlins, which allows for the employment of the imprecise designation 'Berlin,' effectively erases the *de jure* and *de facto* difference between them. The material partitioning of the city results in a communicative partition between the author and the imagined reader with their presumed prior knowledges and experiences. The concrete geopolitical schism works its way into the semantic level of the text, splitting the connection between sign and referent. In such a starkly polarized political environment with its opposing official jargons, language operates not only by means of difference, but also by way of suppression. A proper noun as seemingly unambiguous as 'Berlin' not only becomes ambiguous; it gets swept up into the duel of the competing jargons, enacting either the repression of the city's division or the active denial of an opposing territorial claim. The same word bears two distinct referents, the determination of which depends on the speaker and their ideological bearings vis-à-vis the two Cold War orders: "Die beiden Herrschaftsordnungen, unter denen entlang der Grenze gelebt wird, […] sind auf jeweils andere Bezüge orientiert." (BS, 18) In contrast to the train arrival scene, which "remains similar to itself" (*bleibt sich ähnlich*) in each and every occurrence, the proper noun "Berlin," though its meaning is seemingly self-explanatory, cannot be similar to itself in every instance of its usage.

After having outlined the logic of the two dueling official languages, Johnson returns yet again to the alighting passenger to provide another example of ideologically one-sided terminology and its effects on comprehension:

> Der konventionelle Ausdruck für den Fahrgast, der auf einem (sozusagen) ausländischen Bahnhof für eine längere Zeit aussteigt, beansprucht den 'Flüchtling' als einen propagandistischen Wert; indem er so genannt wird, soll er Vorzüge für die eine und Nachteile für die andere Seite der Grenze beweisen. Er mag doch lediglich umgezogen sein. Die einseitige politische Parteinahme, die den Reisenden sofort zu einer Machtposition hin relativiert, sieht nicht genug von ihm und kann sich noch im Erkannten täuschen [...]. (BS, 10)

The word "conventional" here is Johnson's way of referring to political terminology, which reduces dynamic speech, with its versatility and capacity for change, to frozen, seemingly extra-temporal jargon.[69] Depending on which side of the border the narrator writes from, the traveler is dubbed either a refugee—and thus a potential political ally—or as a traitor or enemy of the state. The latter title is applied to Gesine in *Jahrestage*, though her reasons for leaving the German Democratic Republic by no means stem from an outright rejection of socialism or an uncritical embrace of capitalism. By referring to the passenger as one who has perhaps merely changed address, Johnson presents border-crossing as a potentially apolitical act that, nonetheless, becomes subject to political scrutiny through its casting in one-sided terminology: "Ist dieser Unterschied [zwischen den deutschen Staaten] echt? Wird er einmal zur Sprache gebracht, so akzentuiert er die Entscheidung des Fahrgastes, der hier bleiben will. Hat er es so gemeint?" (BS, 17) In such a volatile environment, in which any and every occurrence can be interpreted as a gain or loss for either side, the mere verbal articulation of an event potentially leads to its political leveraging.

Nonetheless, this political appropriation cannot be easily elided under such dualistic historical circumstances, even when the event reported is a personal one. After introducing the two

[69] "Denn es kommt hinzu, daß beide Machtapparate ihre eigenen sprachlichen Verabredungen getroffen haben und sie in ihrem Gebiet teilweise als Konvention durchsetzen konnten." (BS, 19)

ideologically informed perspectives—referred to elsewhere in the essay as *Schema A* und *Schema B*—, Johnson casts doubt on the potential employment of a third, personal viewpoint, though it might initially appear capable of transcending the two official models:

> Und warum eigentlich sollte zwischen oder neben den beiden Schemata der Berichterstattung noch ein anderes erscheinen? […] Und dies Schema C oder Y wird die abgelehnten Hauptschemata kaum zuverlässig korrigieren, da der Verfasser es ja zusammengesetzt hat aus seinen eigenen Kenntnissen und Absichten. Die sind vielleicht so stellvertretend nicht, wie er am liebsten glauben würde. Das Verfahren ist fragwürdig." (BS, 13-4)

Johnson does not go so far as to question the sheer possibility of a personal, apolitical perspective; indeed, it has been argued that Johnson's literary project relies on the relative autonomy of the individual over against overarching social influences.[70] Nevertheless, recourse to individual perspective and personal experience in the creation of a literary work harbors two significant pitfalls. First, it falls prey to the same theoretical missteps as the aforementioned review of *Zwei Ansichten*, namely the universalization of the individual case with all its idiosyncrasies and the unintentional exemplification of what might prove to be little more than an exception. Secondly, it fails to ensure against the subsequent misappropriation of the personal narrative by either of the two regimes, as has already been discussed with respect Johnson's own biography. In point of fact, when one compares the wording of this hypothetical description of an arriving (or departing) "refugee" with an interview between Johnson and Horst Bienek that took place a year after the publication of this essay, it becomes clear that Johnson is at least implicitly referring here to his own move from the GDR to the FRG.[71] Thus rather than bypass the official terminologies of the

[70] "In allen Romanen Johnsons geht es um die politisch-moralische Integrität des Individuums unter bedrückenden Umständen […]." Ulrich Fries, "Überlegungen zu Johnsons zweitem Buch," *Johnson-Jahrbuch* 2 (1995), 226.

[71] "Ich bin in ostdeutscher Terminologie ein Flüchtling. In westdeutscher Amtssprache bin ich kein Flüchtling, sondern jemand, der umgezogen ist." Horst Bienek, "Horst Bienek im Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson," in *Werkstattgespräche mit Schriftstellern* (Munich: Deutsch Taschenbuch Verlag, 1965), 118.

two warring ideologies, which would anyways prove impossible, the author, according to Johnson, should employ both of their respective lexicons within the same literary work, all the while drawing attention to the limitations and constructedness of each—a method embodied in the parenthetical "(sozusagen)" from the previously cited passage. Ideally, however, the deconstructive act implied by the phrase "as it were" should be carried out not by means of authorial direct address, but rather by the text's own formal structure, a technique that will be explicated in the following.

As the reproduction of partisan language universalizes a narrow ideological perspective and reinforces the linguistic divide between the city's two halves, Johnson imputes a particularly important role to literature. Though claiming that the regimes' linguistic tools do not sit well in the hands of literary authors, he recognizes that literature can still serve as a witting or unwitting instrument of propaganda, particularly owing to its tendency to present unique incidents as expressions of a general principle: "Der Verfasser […] hält den Vorfall überhaupt für ein Beispiel, das man anführen darf. Er glaubt, daß es etwas beweist über die Lebensverhältnisse beiderseits der Grenze." (BS, 14) By rendering a single episode universal, the author casts it over the border, so to speak, projecting similarity and an unbroken line of continuity in a manner than nullifies all difference. Such a gesture recapitulates the very act of appropriation described above and turns the author, unpartisan as they may be with regard to the two blocs, into an effective surrogate for one of the two regimes; to repeat the citation provided earlier, "[Der Verfasser] fängt einfach an. Dann wird er zum Sprecher eines Personenkreises, der ihn nicht beauftragt hat. Oder man hält ihn dafür." (BS, 13) Returning to the beginning of the essay, it becomes clear that the train episode does not fail to symbolize Berlin solely because of the complications and complexities added by the searches at the city and sector borders. Even in Berlin, at least until August of 1961, a train might

very well arrive at a station, a passenger may dismount and exit the station for the street, though their trip may have been prolonged by border crossings. But the simplicity of the "simple train station scene" with its alighting "individual" is what makes it incommensurate with the proper noun 'Berlin.' This inequivalence is partly owing to the incapacity of any singular scene to adequately symbolize both sides of the ambiguous 'Berlin' (West and East), but also because the episode naively attempts to omit the status of the traveler and the purpose of their trip. From the perspective of the larger historical context, there is no innocuous depiction of a person arriving at a train station in Berlin, particularly at a moment when tens of thousands of East Germans are fleeing the GDR through Berlin each month.[72] The arrival of an FRG—or even a GDR—citizen at the *Ostbahnhof*, for instance, becomes symptomatic of larger tendencies by virtue of its literary patina and therefore a promotion of the East German cause. The inverted scenario appears as West German publicity, a "case" (*Fall*) with a highly representative value. (BS, 13)

In order to offer an alternative to the problematically simple episode described in the essay's opening, Johnson writes a version of the train scene that might more adequately capture the sequence of events leading up to and following the arrival of a train in a (West) Berlin station:

> Die elektrische Stadtbahn also, die aus einem dörflichen Ort im ostdeutschen Staat auf die Reise geschickt wird, hält an der Stadtgrenze und wird durchsucht, nach Westberlin entlassen durchfährt sie es eine Weile, bis sie nach Ostberlin kommt, kurz darauf wird sie durchsucht, weil sie wiederum vor Westberlin ist, sie hält nun noch auf einigen Westberliner Bahnhöfen, und jetzt (zum Beispiel) steigt ein junger Mann aus. Er hat den Zug betreten (zum Beispiel) in dem kleinen Ort vor der Stadt, er kann inzwischen zweimal seinen Ausweis vorgewiesen und die Handtasche zur Kontrolle geöffnet haben, hier verläßt er den Zug, der aber nach einiger Zeit Westberlin verläßt und in das ostdeutsche Staatsgebiet einläuft, um durchsucht zu werden. Jetzt sitzt auf dem Platz ein anderer Fahrgast. (BS, 9)

In this instance, to speak of merely one Berlin border would be an oversimplification: the train crosses two, one of them at two different sections, and is inspected twice before arriving at the

[72] Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 252.

passenger's destination. The initially desired episode constitutes an orthodox narrative with a clear beginning (the train's arrival), middle (the passenger's crossing of the platform), and end (their exit from the train station). But Johnson's updated rendition buckles the spine of this narrative arc, reshuffles its component parts, and marks the discontinuities between each of its individual moments. The syntagmatic organization of the story, the logic of its unfolding, is disrupted at numerous points by various obstructions. And instead of offering an uncomplicated progression with a linear temporal structure, the mini-narrative follows a route as circuitous as the winding city railway: the young man's boarding of the train in a provincial East German town is recounted after he has already arrived in West Berlin, and then the train journey is essentially repeated, though this time in the subjunctive mood and with an eye to the monitoring of the passenger at each individual checkpoint. Moreover, the series of events that make up the sequence expands both outwardly, as the train continues on into East Berlin with a new passenger, and inwardly; stops and details are added in a manner that effectively slows the train's progress to a crawl. Though the act of narrating remains central, the author's mode of writing moves closer to description, which privileges spatiality and accumulation over the steady temporal progression of narration.[73] Ultimately, Johnson's decision to leave out the arrival scene altogether, rather than alter it in accordance with the unique conditions in East and West Berlin, is understandable considering the outsize length of the new description, which makes it poorly suited to fulfill the function of a cursory "pause." As Johnson suggests, the continuity demanded by the epic genre allows for, and perhaps even benefits from, the occasional brief interruption. But the expansion of this concise

[73] Klaus R. Scherpe, "Beschreiben, nicht Erzählen! Beispiele zu einer ästhetischen Opposition," *Zeitschrift für die Germanistik* 6, no. 2 (1996), 369-70. Holger Helbig and Ulrich Krellner have both interpreted "Berliner Stadtbahn" as a response to Georg Lukács' essay *Erzählen oder beschreiben?*, in which description is censured for its stasis, its proximity to journalism, and its alleged preoccupation with surface phenomena. Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung. Untersuchungen zu Uwe Johnsons Roman »Das dritte Buch über Achim«* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 118-123; Ulrich Krellner, *»Was ich im Gedächtnis ertrage«. Untersuchungen zum Erinnerungskonzept von Uwe Johnsons Erzählwerk* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2003), 116.

episode, initially meant to serve the text and its pacing, into an independent element worthy of an extensive description obstructs the flow of the narrative and disintegrates the desired totality.

Furthermore, Johnson's rendition of the crossing features not only a clogging of the syntagmatic connections, but also a highlighting and, therefore, an obstruction of literature's conventional manner of representation: "[U]nd jetzt (zum Beispiel) steigt ein junger Mann aus. Er hat den Zug betreten (zum Beispiel) in dem kleinen Ort vor der Stadt, er kann inzwischen zweimal seinen Ausweis vorgewiesen und die Handtasche zur Kontrolle geöffnet haben […]." (BS, 9) While offering a literary scene of supposedly exemplary value, Johnson simultaneously undercuts that exemplarity and draws the reader's attention to the conventional literary operation of presenting a singular incident as paradigmatic. The repeated parenthetical "for instance" and the subjunctive mode of the final clause retain the episode in a state of potentiality; the author does not "simply" start because he does not start at all. Or rather, he does not stop starting, as the possibilities for different cases are endless. To put it differently, the train does not arrive in the station because it is in fact continually setting out, its point of origin and destination shifting in accordance with the perspective of its passengers. One could just as easily present the trajectory of the subsequent rider, the one who has taken the young man's seat as the train continues its journey, as exemplary. What is crucial, however, is that the train continues to regularly cross the border both ways, allowing the traveler to expose themselves to the distinct experiences and expressions of the other side and compare them against those of their own 'Berlin,' thereby estranging themselves from their own learned intellectual and linguistic habits. And according to Johnson, the literary text that engages both East and West Germany in a commensurate manner should represent as well as recreate this process. In this regard, it takes the Berlin train station as its model:

> In diesem Modell leben zwei gegensätzliche staatliche Organisationen, zwei wirtschaftliche Arrangements, zwei Kulturen so eng nebeneinander, daß sie einander nicht aus dem Blick verlieren können und einander berühren müssen. Solche Nachbarschaft fordert den genauen Vergleich.[74] (BS, 10)

The inevitability of trans-border contact at a Berlin station ensures acknowledgement of alternative lifestyles and forms of existence that, in turn, relativize one's own seemingly self-reliant and stable position. Among other things, this simultaneous recognition of the alterity of the self and the other is what is implied by Johnson's invocation of the "precise comparison." And the text that fashions itself as a border zone by offering a space for confrontation and collision, incorporating ostensibly incompatible strands of discourse and perspectives and juxtaposing them in a non-hierarchical manner, casts their professedly transregional and trans-historic claims into doubt.

This juxtaposition of perspectives should be understood not merely as referring to the politically-inflected jargons or ideological stances of the two German states; a reference to the omniscience characteristic of the work of Honoré de Balzac indicates that Johnson quite literally considers narrative focalization to be part of the previously described universalization of a necessarily limited viewpoint:

> [Die Bedingungen des Kalten Krieges] haben […] sich eigentlich ausgewirkt auf den Platz des Erzählers. Wo steht der Autor in seinem Text? Die Manieren der Allwissenheit sind verdächtig. Der göttergleiche Überblick eines Balzac ist bewundernswert. Balzac lebte von 1799 bis 1850. (BS, 20)

The postwar author historically situates Balzac at the transitional moment between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, indicating the father of French Realism's historical liminality, much like Johnson's own, but also implying that the popularized narrative mode of the bygone author does

[74] Interestingly, it was precisely this possibility of a comparison that led the Soviet Ambassador to the GDR to advise Moscow to close the city's border, as cited by Tony Judt in *Postwar*: "The presence in Berlin of an open and, to speak to the point, uncontrolled border between the socialist and capitalist worlds unwittingly prompts the population to make a comparison between both parts of the city, which, unfortunately, does not always turn out in favour of Democratic [i.e. East] Berlin." Tony Judt, *Postwar*, 250.

not readily offer itself as a solution to the aesthetic and political complications presented by Johnson's contemporary moment. Balzacian omniscience does not have its place in the Cold War era. Furthermore, such an omniscient perspective does not represent a raising of the narrator to the all-seeing eye of the author, but rather constitutes an attempt by the author to project a false congruity over what is, at base, an assemblage of disparate viewpoints, none of which could manage to fully contain all the others. By contrast, Johnson highlights the gaps between distinct points of view, as will be made clear in the subsequent analysis of *Das dritte Buch*. Ultimately, instead of glossing over the contradictions between the two ideological regimes by drawing them into the same unbroken, monological universe of a single narrative perspective, the text, as Johnson conceives it, offers a space for the two systems to collide and confront one another, to enter into a kind of dialectical exchange without the promise of a text-immanent synthesis. Indeed, he hints at the impossibility of housing these two conflicting orders under a uniform viewpoint through his suggestive description of a Berlin border station, the starting point and initial stumbling block of the essay in question: "Es gibt keinen einheitlichen Ausdruckszusammenhang für das Gemisch unabhängiger Phänomene, die auf einem solchen Bahnhof zusammentreffen." (BS, 18) The text, like the border station, offers a locale for the incompatible regimes' meeting without providing the kind of overarching cohesion that might simply elide the mutually exclusive hostility between the two orders. It is arguably in this vein that one should understand Johnson's own English title for this essay, which he wrote at the top of one of the typoscripts: "The Berlin Border of the Divided World as a Place of Writing."[75]

[75] Uwe Johnson, *Berliner Stadtbahn* [The Berlin Border of the Divided World as a Place of Writing], UJA Rostock, UJA/H/000466, Mappe 1, Bl. 1.

## IV. A Novel of Incongruity

Though "Berliner Stadtbahn" was composed after the first typescript of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* was finished, a close analysis of the novel demonstrates that Johnson must have already elaborated many of the former's principles even earlier, particularly as regards the complication of narrative perspective and the juxtaposition of distinct ideological discourses. The first typescript of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* was written over the course of eight months between June 17, 1960 and March 2, 1961, after Johnson had already relocated from Leipzig to West Berlin. The author had originally intended to write a biography on the famous East German cyclist Gustav-Adolf 'Täve' Schur, but this plan had been abandoned in favor of a fictional account of an equally influential athlete-cum-assemblyman. As evidenced by notes found in his unpublished works, Johnson feared affirming the dictatorship of the Socialist Unity Party by documenting conditions in the GDR in the manner of a reportage: "[Der Plan] scheint vordringlich gescheitert an der Tatsächlichkeit, die das benutze Material in solcher non-fiktiven-fiktiven Beschreibung hätte behalten müssen. Ich sehe keinen Weg, wie das Wort d-d-R [sic] ohne anführende Zeichen festzuhalten wäre."[76] Johnson's desire to distance his material from mere "facts" arises out of a thoroughly Lukácsian impulse: without a critical apparatus in place, the reproduction of ideological jargon and seemingly natural societal conditions indispensable to a depiction of everyday GDR life runs the risk of legitimizing its distortions of reality and failing to illuminate its underlying historical and political wellsprings.[77] And the genre of the biography might hinder

[76] Cited in Alexandra Kleihues, *Medialität der Erinnerung. Uwe Johnson und der Dokumentarismus in der Nachkriegsliteratur* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), 55. Johnson makes a related remark in an interview with Horst Bienek in 1962: "Ich höre mit Befriedigung, daß Sie endlich »sogenannte DDR« gesagt haben, daß Sie, nachdem Sie schon ein paarmal die DDR erwähnten, auch einmal hinzufügen »sogenannt«. Ich halte es für eine sehr korrekte Hinzufügung, denn tatsächlich haben die ostdeutschen Kommunisten es »so genannt«." Horst Bienek, "Horst Bienek im Gespräch mit Uwe Johnson," 116.

[77] For an example of Lukács' critique of the literary reproduction of mere *Tatsachen*, as opposed to more thoroughgoing criticism that seeks out the underlying causes of malignant social "facts," see his scathing review of

a more comprehensive political critique, as it would focus its attention on the concrete individual of Schur rather than on his abstract function in the machinery of GDR mythmaking. Such was the basis of Johnson's 1967 letter to *Der Spiegel*, in which he responded to a critic who had interpreted *Das dritte Buch* as a *roman à clef*: "Was Sie zu einer Gleichsetzung veranlasste, mögen Parallelen objektiver Natur gewesen sein. Tatsächlich ging ich aus von der spezifischen sozialen Funktion eines Sportlers in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik […]." (*BU*, 171) According to the author, a truly "objective" account of the German Democratic Republic would call for the fictional reorganization and mediation of factual phenomena and consideration of the private person from the perspective of the social whole, much in keeping with Lukács' own aesthetic principles from the 1930s.

Johnson's novel, however, hardly epitomizes the critical realism advocated by the Hungarian philosopher. At the level of content, the undramatic events at the center of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* seem a far cry from those of Tolstoy's epic novels, for instance. Karsch, a West German journalist, travels to Leipzig at the behest of his ex-girlfriend Karin in order to write a biography on her current partner, an internationally renowned cyclist by the name of Achim. The novel takes place around 1959, after a brief political thaw and during the beginnings of the East German government's collectivization of the agricultural sector.[78] Early in the story, the

Ernst Ottwalt's documentary-style indictment of the Weimar judicial system *Denn sie wissen was sie tun*: "Gen. Ottwalt befindet sich ferner im Irrtum, wenn er die Marxsche Auffassung der Realität mit seinen »Tatsachen« identifiziert. […] [Im »Kapital«] spricht Marx davon, »daß in der Erscheinung die Dinge sich oft verkehrt darstellen« und weist dies an der Hand einer Reihe von der Oekonomie dem Alltagsleben entlehnten Kategorien (»Tatsachen! Tatsachen!«) wie »Preis der Arbeit« nach […]." Georg Lukács, "Aus der Not eine Tugend," in *Romantheorie. Dokumentation ihrer Geschichte in Deutschland seit 1880*, ed. Eberhard Lämmert et al (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1971), 199.

[78] General Secretary Walter Ulbricht's tolerance of appeals for a *Dritter Weg* between the FRG and the Soviet Union was markedly short-lived. The incarceration of Walter Janka in late 1956 is widely considered the end of this brief relaxation of political oppression. Ulrich Mähert, *Kleine Geschichte der DDR*, 7th ed. (München: C.H. Beck, 2010), 83-86.

protagonist is approached by Socialist Unity Party (SED) functionaries who, under the pretense of offering material and editorial assistance, try to pressure him into presenting Achim as an immaculate symbol of the socialist state's preeminence over its morally corrupt Western neighbor. Nevertheless, Karsch maintains his distance, declining to enter into a contractual agreement with the state-sponsored publishing press. The majority of the novel's action orbits around the reconstruction of Achim's life story, of which the Nazi period and the immediate postwar years naturally occupy the center of attention. After attempting to manage omissions and conspicuous differences between official accounts (the two previous biographies published in the GDR), recollections from family and friends, and Achim's own dubious rehashings events from his own life, Karsch comes to realize the irreconcilable conflict between the truthful depiction of Achim's private life and the state's disingenuous political mission to construct its own founding mythology. The mysterious surfacing of a photograph, in which—despite his fervent denial—Achim appears to be marching in the People's Uprising of 1953, leads to the dissolution of his relationship with Karin and Karsch's abandonment of the doomed project. In contradistinction to the harmonious unity of Tolstoy's art, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* gives the lie to such aesthetic wholeness in an age of ideological bifurcation and disingenuousness, in a manner that keeps with the poetic program laid out in "Berliner Stadtbahn."

Moreover, not only does *Das dritte Buch über Achim* depict the failure of a unified form; the novel itself constitutes an aggregate of fragments awaiting integration by the reader. Naturally, the plot does not proceed in accordance with the historical chronology of the events. Such a depiction necessitates splitting the narrative into at least two distinct levels, levels that the structuralist Gérard Genette, for instance, would label "metadiegetic" and "(intra)diegetic."[79]

[79] Gérard Genette, "D'un récit baroque," in *Figures II* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 202.

Applied to Johnson's novel, the intradiegetic level might refer to the portrayal of Karsch's interviews and discussions with Achim and others, whereas the metadiegetic level would denote the remembrances themselves. However, this model quickly proves far too simple, as these levels often multiply to the third, fourth, or fifth degree. Of course, such narrative "embedding," as Tzvetan Todorov calls it, occurs in classical realist narratives with minimal interruption of narrative flow.[80] But Johnson interferes with this straightforward progression by abruptly shifting levels without warning and, thanks to heterodiegetic temporal deviations, surreptitiously presenting metadiegetic retellings as intradiegetic descriptions.[81] For instance, what originally appears to be Karsch's interview of Achim's father actually turns out to be Karin's recounting to Karsch of her own meeting with Achim's father. The novel's eschewal of unbroken plot development in favor of a fitful, loosely chronological progression of flashbacks and flash-forwards allows for the occasional misleading omission. In the example cited above, Johnson leaves out the scene in which Karin begins telling Karsch her story. The result is that the metadiegetic narrative lacks a frame; it stands on its own, and only in retrospect is it subordinated to the overarching authority of Karsch's point of view. What's more, the protagonist himself is not located at the top of this perspectival hierarchy, as Karsch's storyline is transmitted by an unnamed and unidentified extradiegetic narrator, who reports the narrative's events in response to the questions of a fictional reader. Thus, the plot is not only structured around Karsch's diegetic interviews, in which flashbacks imperceptibly intermingle with the present; it is also founded upon and heavily influenced by an underlying extradiegetic dialogue with its own temporality.

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[80] Tzvetan Todorov, *Poétique de la prose* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978), 37-8.

[81] Genette dubs "heterodiegetic" those storylines that are noncontiguous with the primary narrative. Gérard Genette, "D'un récit baroque," 202. Thus, with regard to *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, a heterodiegetic flashback (analepsis) or flash-forward (prolepsis) would transfer the reader from Karsch's present storyline (and focalization) to Achim's past, and vice-versa. See also Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 50.

This inconsonance between the novel's many narrators and the content of their narratives is one example of the formal incongruities of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to two such examples. The following section will continue the foregoing investigation of the novel's separate diegetic levels. As will be demonstrated, Johnson's seemingly incongruous patchwork of various points of view is occasionally counterbalanced by instances of perspectival layering, which formally stages the hermeneutical drive at the center of the novel. This layering occurs not only through the author's play with focalization, but through the combination of ideologically loaded discourses and regionalisms as well, nodding toward the attempted fusion of languages addressed in the following section. This section will take up the notion of the *Vergleich* with respect to the author's (and narrator's) wary yet necessary employment of tropes in describing situations unfamiliar to the imagined reader. These tropes enact a kind of *Grenzverschiebung* in their crossing from one semantic field into a seemingly incompatible one.[82] Each section will begin by analyzing specific instances of these literary devices and will then draw out their theoretical underpinnings. Ultimately, these analyses will demonstrate the manner in which Johnson's method of writing not only imitates (and occasionally reinforces) the politics of ideological incongruity established during the fifties, but also the ways in which it overcomes these dualistic worldviews, at least in part by turning their own tools against them.

[82] Usage of the term *Grenzverschiebung* with regard to metonymy and synecdoche is taken from the work of the renowned German Romance philologist Heinrich Lausberg, whose *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik* was published in 1960. The basis for this figurative term might be found in in the German participle *übertragen*, which means "figurative" but also, quite literally, "carried over." Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik. Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1990), 284-289.

## V. Blending of Perspectives

Unlike "Berliner Stadtbahn," the plot of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* unfolds neither in the capital of the GDR nor in the western enclave abutting it. Quite distinct from the interstitial status of Berlin, the *Schneise* or "swathe" that cannot be cut into the urban landscape in "Berliner Stadtbahn" makes an appearance in the opening paragraph of *Das dritte Buch*. In this paragraph, the author-narrator gives a detailed description of a stretch of the internal German border near the northern town of Lübeck: "zehn Meter breit aufgepflügt drängt der Kontrollstreifen in den eigens gerodeten Wald, die Karrenwege und Trampelpfade sind eingesunken und zugewachsen." (*DBA*, 7) In stark contrast to the interstate traffic within Berlin's metropolitan area, this provincial restricted area only allows for movement parallel to the demarcation line. Furthermore, the description of the "sunken and overgrown" cart paths and trails visualizes the unambiguous rift between the two nations and suggests its ability to naturalize itself. The forest clearing embodies the regimes' shared desire to imprint themselves upon the natural world, as if in a materialization of their self-naturalizing ideologies. Scholars have noted the importance of natural landscapes in Johnson's oeuvre; the author's unpublished first novel *Ingrid Babendererde: Reifeprüfung 1953* has been described as a kind of *Heimatroman*, albeit one that depicts the corruption of the harmonious natural environs of Mecklenburg as a consequence of Stalin-era political witch-hunts.[83] Similarly, the provincial scenes in *Mutmassungen über Jakob*, which take place in and around the Cresspahl home in the fictional town of Jerichow, attest to the author's prolonged preoccupation with this rural stretch of Northern Germany, although the Mecklenburg of

[83] In his analysis of *Ingrid Babendererde*, Michael Hofmann claims that Johnson is an idyllist at root: "Der erste Roman des jungen Autors lässt aber auch spüren, […] dass Johnson durchaus als ein Idylliker bezeichnet werden kann, der in seinen Texten formal und inhaltlich darlegt, warum die grundsätzlich erstrebte Idylle in der geschichtlichen Erfahrung unseres Jahrhunderts nur als eine verlorene denkbar und darstellbar ist." Michael Hofmann, *Uwe Johnson* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2001), 40-1.

*Mutmassungen* appears in far less idyllic terms than it does in *Ingrid*. *Das dritte Buch*, by contrast, begins with the political-geographical laceration of this bucolic terrain, as if the questionable genre of the *Heimatroman* had been dealt a fatal blow. The narrative perspective then makes a cursory turn to Hamburg in the Federal Republic, and shortly thereafter to an unnamed city in the GDR that has been identified as Leipzig in the scholarship.[84] The latter city is where the majority of the novel's action unfolds.

Just as the restricted area, as an impediment to interstate mobility, figures as an apparatus of separation in contradistinction to the border station as topos of connectivity, it also confronts the reader with the concrete, material partition between the two German states in an apparent and incontestable form. There exists no ambiguity as to the two states' categorical distinctness. In Leipzig, on the other hand, the protagonist discovers to his great dismay that certain superficial commonalities might hoodwink the West German visitor into presuming a fundamental kinship between East and West Germany, a kinship that ultimately proves elusive. In an early conversation with Achim and Karin, Karsch describes the process by which his occasional impressions of similarity between the two states give way to a generalized recognition of distinctness:

> Karsch versuchte es noch einmal. Die Sprache, die er verstand und mit der er verständlich über den Tag gekommen war, redete ihn noch oft in die Täuschung von Zusammengehörigkeit hinein, wieder hielt er beide Staaten für vergleichbar, wollte in Gedanken sie reinweg zusammenlegen, da doch ein vergessenes Ladenschild oder die Sprache oder das vertraute Aussehen öffentlicher Gebäude in einem Land an das andere erinnerten; dann aber gingen die Ähnlichkeiten nicht auf in einander: die golden und schwarz aufgemalte Zigarettensorte hatte man dort vor fünfzehn Jahren zum letzten Mal kaufen können, die öffentlichen Gebäude regierte ein anderes Gesetz, dessen Sprache nämlich ordnete das Bild der Straße und nicht das Gespräch der Leute, die da gingen oder hier aus den Häusern niederblickten in der kühlen ruhigen Luft des Abends auf Kissen gestützt und redend: die Sprache der staatlichen Zeitungen verstand Karsch nicht. Achim war sehr betroffen. – Ach: sagte er enttäuscht. Dann fuhren sie los. (*DBA*, 23–4)

[84] Sven Hanuschek, Katja Leuchtenberger and Friederike Schneider, "Nachwort," in *Das dritte Buch über Achim. Rostocker Ausgabe*, vol. 3 of *Historisch-kritische Ausgabe der Werke. Schriften und Briefe Uwe Johnsons*, ed. Holger Helbig, Ulrich Fries and Katja Leuchtenberger (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2019), 328-9.

As the first sentence indicates, this passage represents Karsch's second attempt to convey this disorienting experience to his hosts. Just like in "Berliner Stadtbahn," the struggle to communicate in a clear and intelligible manner is a central theme of *Das dritte Buch über Achim* as well. This endeavor to overcome a rift in communication applies not only to the author-reader relationship, but also to Karsch's attempt to come to terms with his new East German environs, not to mention Achim himself, the subject of his biography.

The passage begins with the listing of certain trivial similarities and then proceeds to a more in-depth acknowledgement of difference, in which discursive disparities between the two states hold a central place. The narrator, as it first appears, begins by noting the protagonist's initial impression of commensurability between the two German nations owing to their mutual participation in a common language. But in Karsch's case the common language promotes inter-cultural understanding only to a limited degree. It is a coarse instrument that gets him through the day—hardly an ideal medium for a writer struggling to tap into a more efficacious line of communication between East and West Germany. The immediate assumption of likeness gives way to a more fine-grained recognition of dissimilarity. The protagonist realizes that the public buildings that had previously struck him as akin to those of his homeland are in fact "ruled" by an altogether different law. Furthermore, whereas the colloquial language strikes Karsch as familiar, the official language of the GDR, at least as it appears in its laws, banners, and newspapers, is foreign to the point of unintelligibility. Admittedly, there is a distinction drawn here between the *Sprache* of the state and the *Gespräch* of its citizens, paralleling to a certain degree the Saussurean division between the synchronic, normative *langue* and the diachronic *parole* that is living discourse. Nevertheless, as is conceded in the same essay, the ruling party's preformed ideological jargon leaves an indelible mark on everyday speech. Elsewhere in the novel, the impact of the

official state discourse on the speech of its citizens reveals itself with particular potency in the case of SED functionaries like Herr Fleisg who, as the chief editor of the local newspaper, speaks like a mouthpiece of the Socialist Unity Party.[85] Regarding the idiolects of the other East German citizens portrayed, each character occupies a place on the same spectrum as Herr Fleisg, with Karin, for instance, on the end opposite Fleisg and Achim somewhere in the middle.[86] Lexical differences between the states even arise in cases where the influence of political jargon may not be readily apparent, such as when Karsch juxtaposes the West and East German words for "racing bike": "(ein Rennrad heißt Maschine. In Deutschland liegt eine undurchlässige Grenze) [...]." (*DBA*, 102) If one reads the second sentence figuratively, then it appears that Karsch perceives the differing terminology as further evidence of the impermeable (semantic) border between the FRG and the GDR.

Returning to the discussion between Karsch, Karin, and Achim described in the passage cited above, the reader is confronted with several formal peculiarities that might initially prove disorienting. In fact, one perceives here the very intermingling of diegetic levels discussed in the previous section of this chapter, as well as a seeming conflation of unarticulated thought and articulated speech. As opposed to *Mutmaßungen über Jakob* and *Ingrid Babendererde*, in which Johnson frequently sets the speech of his characters apart from that of the narrator through hyphens, the present subjunctive, or italics (though hardly ever with quotation marks), *Das dritte*

[85] The same must be said of Frau Amman, a character likely modelled on Anna Seghers, who takes it upon herself to oversee Karsch's biography and keep it within the aesthetic parameters of state-sponsored literature. In a conversation with Karsch, she goes so far as to present this characteristic as a virtue: "Nicht ich spreche mit Ihnen sondern das Interesse des Staates an einer neuen und nützlichen Literatur." (*DBA*, 118)

[86] Unlike Achim, who frequently hides his own opinions beneath the impersonal jargon of the state, Karin takes advantage of its vagueness and ambiguity in making subtly dissident remarks: "Über die neuerlich wegweisenden Maßnahmen des Sachwalters äußerte sie: darüber sei sie sicherlich einer Meinung mit allen Menschen guten Willens." (*DBA*, 146) For the reader, who by this point in the novel is already familiar with her skepticism toward the General Secretary Walter Ulbricht (the ironically dubbed *Sachwalter*) and the Party, the sardonic undertone is clear.

*Buch* juxtaposes direct and indirect speech with an ambiguous form of free indirect speech that could be read as reproducing thoughts or written speech. Moreover, the narrator's unpredictable shifts between direct, indirect, and free indirect speech creates a kind of uneven discursive and perspectival ground for the reader. As a result, the reader is often unable to conclusively identify the speaker or point of view until quite far into a scene or description. Even then, their assessment might suddenly be upended by the appearance of an unexpected deictic adverb, modal particle, or other contextualizing element. In this passage, for instance, the narrator seems to initially step back from the specific context of the conversation to offer a more general description of the protagonist's observations in the GDR: "Karsch versuchte es noch einmal. Die Sprache, die er verstand und mit der er verständlich über den Tag gekommen war, redete ihn noch oft in die Täuschung von Zusamengehörigkeit hinein […]." The employment of past indicative, in this case, could be said to signal the speech of the narrator. However, the appearance of the modal particle *doch* and the polysyndetic fifth clause of the second sentence seemingly consolidates the voices of Karsch and the narrator in the manner of free indirect speech, which constitutes a first instance of contextualization: "da doch ein vergessenes Ladenschild oder die Sprache oder das vertraute Aussehen öffentlicher Gebäude in einem Land an das andere erinnerten […]." The source of these statements is not the narrator, but rather Karsch. The reader might then assume that the unpunctuated characterization of West Germany's excessive consumer advertising mimetically reproduces Karsch's interior monologue, particularly since the sentence immediately preceding this passage presents Karsch's thoughts in the form of free indirect speech: ""Karsch sah [Karin] verstehen. Sie ließ sich zurückfallen, schwieg aber. Das hatte sie früher noch nicht gekonnt." (*DBA*, 23) Thus Achim's disappointed response ("Ach") brings about a second surprising contextualization, retroactively recasting the long preceding sentence as reported speech. What

initially appeared to be an unarticulated monologue reveals itself to be part of a spoken dialogue between characters; its meaning is defined not only by the subjective blind spots and omissions of the speaker but by the participation of the interlocutors and the specific context of the discussion. The identity of the conversation partners, though perhaps of lesser importance here, becomes crucial during later interviews between Karsch and Achim's family, as is particularly true with Achim's grandmother, who initially displays reticence toward the West German journalist: "[Achims Großmutter] war gastfreundlich und mißtrauisch beim ersten Mal, sie sprach freiwillig nur vom Tod des neuen Bürgermeisters und vom verächtlichen Betragen der Amerikaner. [Karsch] kam zurück und brachte Karin mit und Grüße von Achims Vater." (*DBA*, 153) As is so often the case in Johnson's novel, words prove to be more than mere self-evident signs delivered in a monological vacuum. They represent utterances whose meaning must be negotiated between or among individuals within the interpersonal realm of the dialogue.[87]

To appreciate the extent to which the dialogue as a form is central to Johnson's novel, it will help to turn to the novel's opening. The opening two-and-a-half-page paragraph is one of the richest lengths of text in Johnson's entire body of work. Every one of the novel's major concerns is addressed, either directly or indirectly, in this passage. It is a byzantine series of run-on sentences combining various tenses and verbal moods while perplexingly blending the intra- and extradiegetic levels of the narrative. The following is merely the first three sentences of this passage:

> da dachte ich schlicht und streng anzufangen so: sie rief ihn an, innezuhalten mit einem Satzzeichen, und dann wie selbstverständlich hinzuzufügen: über die Grenze, damit du

[87] Though the differences between the first and second typescripts of *Das dritte Buch* are, for the most part, relatively slight, one of the elements than Johnson appears to augment in his editing process is the dialogical quality of the novel; the italicized interjections of the fictional reader, for instance, constitute late additions: "Auffällig ist, dass Johnson insbesondere in die Dialogisierung dieser Anschlussstellen Arbeit investiert, also die Einbettung der Kursivpassagen in dialogische Zusammenhänge gezielt vorangetrieben hat [...]. Auch an anderen Stellen des Textes hat er das Erzählen gezielt in dialogische Kontexte eingebettet [...]." Sven Hanuschek, Katja Leuchtenberger and Friederike Schneider, "Nachwort," in *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, 327.

> überrascht wirst und glaubst zu verstehen. Kleinmütig (nicht gern zeige ich Unsicherheit schon anfangs) kann ich nicht anders als ergänzen daß es im Deutschland der fünfziger Jahre eine Staatsgrenze gab; du siehst wie unbequem dieser zweite Satz steht neben dem ersten. (*DBA*, 7)

As Holger Helbig has noted in his analysis of this opening paragraph, not only does *Das dritte Buch über Achim* take up the longstanding literary tradition of *in medias res*; it actually starts in the middle of a sentence—and perhaps even in the middle of a conversation, in response to one of the many interposed questions or *Zwischenfragen* by a fictional reader or interlocutor that structure the novel.[88] The latter interpretation would be entirely consistent with the intradiegetic segments of the text that first appear as monologues thought or written by the protagonist and only later reveal themselves to be utterances spoken in a dialogue. In this respect, the novel's opening adverb seems particularly salient, since its meaning depends wholly on context. *Da* is arguably one of the most ambiguous deixes in the German language. It can serve as either a spatial or temporal adverb, and in its spatial sense it demonstrates a flexibility lacking in both *hier* and *dort*. In fact, its use can be either autodeictic (corresponding to *hier*) or heterodeictic (*dort*). Naturally, this deictic indeterminacy is nearly impossible to translate into English, where the German tertiary model of principal spatial deixes must be replaced by a simple binary (here/there).[89] Therefore, in a metaphorical sense, one could interpret the adverb as a kind of frontier commuter or *Grenzgänger*, capable of working equally well on the proximal or distal side of the deictic border.

The combination of narrative convention and the lack of localizing descriptors likely leads the reader to interpret this opening adverb temporally. However, the adverb's spatial dimension resonates here alongside its temporal meaning, particularly in a novel in which the standpoint of

[88] Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 17.

[89] A similar denotational elasticity can be detected in its temporal meaning, which might be understood as signifying either "then"—referring to the perfective inception of an action—or the more durative "at that time."

the characters—particularly that of the protagonist—plays such a crucial role. It is worth noting that the term 'standpoint' is both literal and figurative here, as both meanings are interconnected for the author. For instance, the title of Johnson's novel *Zwei Ansichten* signals his linking of visual optics and ideological frames of reference, as the author himself explained in an interview: "Entsprechend meint der Titel auch die alten Bedeutungen des Wortes an sich, die vue, den Prospekt, »von einer Seite her gesehen«, bis hin zur schlichten Verschiedenheit der Meinungen."[90] Johnson's texts repeatedly draw attention to the specific spatial coordinates of the narrator or the focalized character.[91] During the discussion in the car between Karsch, Achim, and Karin, for example, the increasing focalization of the discourse through Karsch is accompanied by a shift from distal (*dort*) to proximal deixes (*hier*), with *da* serving as a point of transition.[92] In this instance, the deictic relocation of the narrative discourse toward the East German cityscape or *Straßenbild* reproduces the goal of Karsch's entire project: the protagonist hopes to comprehend an experience that he gradually comes to realize may be "etwas für sich allein und zu erfassen nur von sich aus," namely the experience of the East German people. (*DBA*, 21)

Returning to the opening of the novel, the reader notes that the first sentence, which immediately draws attention to the inner German border, also establishes a division between two

[90] Uwe Johnson, "Auskünfte und Abreden zu *Zwei Ansichten*," in *»Ich überlege mir die Geschichte...« Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, 86.

[91] In the book reviews Johnson wrote for East German publishing presses following his graduation from the University of Leipzig, he consistently comments on the reviewed works' restriction or broadening of the narrator's visual and epistemological horizon: "Die Beschränkung des erzählerischen Horizonts auf den der erzählten Gestalten nach naturalistischer Tradition ist hier schädlich übertrieben insofern, als hier nur mit Auge und Urteil einer Person erzählt wird, die von vornherein borniert angelegt ist." Uwe Johnson, "Gutachten über Rudolf Bartsch: *Die Lüge geht mitten durchs Herz*. Roman, nicht beendet," *Wo ist der Erzähler auffindbar? Gutachten für Verlage 1956-1958,* ed. Bernd Neumann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1992), 146.

[92] This increasing localization, which amounts to a nearing of the object of observation, is described by F.K. Stanzel as a "Verlagerung in der raum-zeitlichen Deixis": "[D]ie für die auktoriale Erzählsituation charakteristische Ferndeixis (damals-dort) [wird] durch die für die personale Erzählsituation charakteristische Nahdeixis (jetzt-hier) vorübergehend verdrängt." F.K. Stanzel, *Theorie des Erzählens*, 7th ed (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2001), 256.

distinct diegetic levels: the extradiegetic level of the narrator—the *Erzählerebene*—and the intradiegetic level of the characters—the *Erzählebene*. And on each level, contact is established between two separate figures. On the intradiegetic level, an as yet unidentified *sie* makes a surprising border-crossing telephone call to a nondescript *ihn*; on the extradiegetic level, the narrator (*ich*) addresses a fictional reader (*du*). Or rather, it might be more accurate to say that the narrator solicits the fictional reader, as the intradiegetic sentence (*Sie rief ihn an, über die Grenze.*) is constructed with an eye toward its effect on the fictional reader.[93] In a sense, the force of the intradiegetic sentence, which strikes or apprehends the fictional reader in the manner of an illocutionary act, reproduces the very action it describes. Thus the opening sentence of the novel itself consists of three partitions that are to some degree structurally parallel: (1) the inner German border between the two German states, which is crossed by means of an international telephone call; (2) the communicational gap between the narrator and the fictional reader, which is crossed by means of illocutionary force; and (3) the diegetic separation between the *Erzählerebene* and the *Erzählebene*, which is crossed by way of the very inter-diegetic slippage addressed in the introduction to this section.

The remainder of this section will concentrate on the third partition between the diegetic levels. Focusing on the very beginning of the opening paragraph, Holger Helbig draws attention to the manner in which the initial syntactical division between the *Erzählerebene* and the *Erzählebene* becomes muddied by the end of the second sentence:

[93] The intradiegetic sentence also provides a hint as to how one might approach Johnson's eccentric punctuation. In a stylistic characteristic that bears striking similarities to the orthographic experimentation of Arno Schmidt, the narrator's illocutionary use of the punctuation mark (*Satzzeichen*) to enact a pause (*Innehalten*) in the reader not only breaks with standard German orthography, but also perhaps demonstrates an attitude toward punctuation that Adorno had described in a short essay from 1956: "Alle [Satzzeichen] sind Verkehrssignale; am Ende wurden diese ihnen nachgebildet. Ausrufungszeichen sind rot, Doppelpunkte grün, Gedankenstriche befehlen stop." Theodor Adorno, "Satzzeichen," *Noten zur Literatur*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 2003), 106. Considering Johnson's intimate knowledge of Adorno, it seems entirely plausible that this text may have influenced his orthographic practices.

> Die syntaktische Trennung kennzeichnet im ersten Satz die Grenze zwischen den beiden Erzählebenen, nach den Doppelpunkten folgt der ERZÄHLEBENE zugehörige Text, der jeweils durch ein Komma beendet wird. […] Der zweite Satz gehört – streng formal betrachtet – der ERZÄHLEREBENE an, denn er ist nicht Bestandteil jener vorgeführten Geschichte des Anrufens. Dennoch schreibt er diese fort, implizit sozusagen, indem er die Beschaffenheit der erwähnten Grenze präzisiert und den historischen Zeitpunkt der Handlung benennt: das Deutschland der fünfziger Jahre. Das macht es für die Leser unbequem: die syntaktische Trennung der beiden Ebenen ist aufgehoben.[94]

The colons and commas that act like a kind of cordon sanitaire between the two diegetic levels in the first sentence disappear in the second, resulting in an orthographically unseparated clause ("daß es im Deutschland der fünfziger Jahre eine Staatsgrenze gab;") that cannot be conclusively attributed to either the extra- or intradiegetic level. Like the seemingly paradoxical content of the clause itself, it simultaneously connotes continuity (there is one Germany) and rupture (that one Germany is divided by an international boundary). Its hypotactic arrangement and the lack of a comma imply that this clause might be a continuation of the preceding extradiegetic clause, whereas its status as supplemental information contextualizing the opening intradiegetic sentence suggests that it does not belongs to the extradiegetic level.

The indeterminacy of this clause raises the question: what is the distinction between the extradiegetic and intradiegetic universes? If the clause could very well belong to either, does this not at least suggest a certain contiguity between the two levels? The fact that the narrator feels compelled to further contextualize the border-crossing telephone call seems to broaden the separation between these two worlds; the case switch from present in the extradiegetic first clause to past in the (perhaps) intradiegetic second clause appears to temporally solidify this gap. Read in this way, it is as if the narrator is speaking from a future in which the German-German border not only no longer stands, but the fictional readership needs to be reminded of its historical existence. However, this reading is inconsistent with later scenes in which the narrator reveals

[94] Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 20-21. Emphasis in the original.

themselves to be a contemporary of Karsch and Karin. For instance, in one of the many interposed questions, the fictional reader/interlocutor inquires after Karin, asking the narrator, "*Wie geht es ihr*?" (*DBA*, 25, emphasis in the original) Interestingly, the narrator responds to this present-tense question not only in the past subjunctive and then the imperfect tense, but also from the perspective of the protagonist: "Karsch nach einer Woche zurückgefahren hätte seinen Freunden gesagt: Ihr kennt sie ja. In der verlangten Kürze nämlich wusste er keine Antwort […]." (*DBA*, 25) This seemingly evasive response offers yet another possible interpretation of the relation of the extradiegetic to the intradiegetic universe, which is to say the relationship between the narrator and Karsch: Karsch *is* the narrator.[95] Indeed, the novel's conclusion, which describes Karsch's return to Hamburg after his abandonment of the biographical project, appears to depict the convergence of protagonist and narrator:

> Karsch kam mit der Dämmerung nach Hause. […] Die meisten Briefe hatten zu lange gelegen und ließen sich nicht mehr beantworten. Das Bankkonto war leer. Nach einer Stunde war der Tisch abgeräumt. Sah auf die Uhr. Nahm das Blatt aus der Maschine
> Telefon
> – Wie war es denn? sagtest du. (*DBA*, 300)

As Colin Riordan has maintained, the disappearance of the third person pronoun and the mimetic immediacy of the final sentences in this passage indicate the erasure of the diegetic levels established in the novel's opening.[96] The identity of the first and third person preterite forms of German verbs allows for the implied pronoun of these sentences to be either *ich* or *er*. Furthermore, the question posed by the caller (*du*) corresponds to the first interposed question that appears in the novel: "*Wie war es denn?*" (*DBA*, 10).

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[95] This interpretation is further supported by a later interposed question with a telling slip: "*Deswegen bliebst du da? Blieb Karsch da?*" (*DBA*, 34)

[96] "Karsch, the object of narration, has moved in time to the point where he has become the narrator. The *erzählte Zeit* has caught up with and coalesced with the *Erzählzeit*." Colin Riordan, *The Ethics of Narration*. *Uwe Johnson's Novels from »Ingrid Babendererde« to »Jahrestage«* (London: Modern Humanities Research, 1989), 25.

In light of this possible reading, one could argue that Karsch effaces himself and dawns the anonymous mantle of the narrator in order to distance himself from and fictionally mediate his own experiences. After seeing a photograph of himself at Achim's thirtieth birthday celebration, a scene recounted earlier in the novel, Karsch expresses his uneasiness with being an active participant in the story he is attempting to relate:

> Ohne Trennstrich daruntergesetzt zeigte eine Fotografie jubelnde Zuschauer an der Bahn. Der untere Rand war die Logenbrüstung, hinter der Karin zu sehen war in lebhaftem Gespräch mit einem Karsch, der zu ihr geneigt auf sie einredet. Sie hört ihm zu, ihr Mund ist schon zur Antwort geöffnet. Der Betrachter hält sie für ein geübtes und entschlossenes Paar. […] In die Geschichte hineingezogen verstand er sie noch weniger." (*DBA*, 36)

In the narrator's response to the fictional reader cited previously, the shift of grammatical person from *ich* to *er* is accompanied by a switch from present tense to what Käte Hamburger calls the epic preterite, which signifies a statement's irreality or fictional status rather than its temporality.[97] The same could therefore be true of the novel's second sentence: the distance between *gab* and *gibt* implies an act of mediation rather than the passage of time. Moreover, this interpretation of the intradiegetic universe as a mediation of the narrator's subjective experience—in which the narrator, in an act of Hegelian self-alienation, transcends the self and becomes an object—would be entirely in keeping with Lukács' description of the goals of critical realism and Johnson's own aforementioned desire to avoid the reifying tendencies of documentary-style reportage.

In the nearly sixty years since this novel's publication, the thesis that the narrator and Karsch are the same person has been advanced as many times as it has been refuted. Johnson himself weighed in on this debate shortly after it began, appearing to confirm in an interview with Horst Bienek in 1962 that Karsch and the narrator are, in fact, one and the same:

[97] In this regard, epic preterite might be better described as a verbal mood (i.e,. subjunctive) rather than a grammatical tense: "Die Bedeutungsveränderung aber besteht darin, daß das Präteritum seine grammatische Funktion, das Vergangene zu bezeichnen, verliert." Käte Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1957), 29.

> BIENEK Wenn ich Sie richtig verstanden habe, dann ist *Das dritte Buch über Achim* sozusagen die Erzählung Karschs, der nach Westdeutschland zurückkehrt und seinen Freunden die Erlebnisse in Ostdeutschland berichtet.
> JOHNSON Sozusagen. Das ist die Beschreibung einer Beschreibung, die Umstände einer Biographie und was in dieser Biographie enthalten sein sollte.
> BIENEK Ja, aber das, was Sie aufgeschrieben haben (wollen wir das einmal genau festhalten), sind also nichts anderes als Karschens Erzählungen?
> JOHNSON Es sind seine Erzählungen.[98]

With this last response, Johnson seemingly satisfies Bienek's desire to clear up the mystery of the narrator once and for all. In a similar manner, Paul Botheroyd's 1976 analysis of *Das dritte Buch* references private conversations with the author in attempting to unequivocally pin down the narrator's identity as Karsch.[99] However, both interlocutors overlook Johnson's discomfort with the genre of the author interview, toward which he consequently adopts an attitude of playful elusiveness: "Ein Interview zu einem Buch schließt oftmals aus, daß man es liest; ein Interview zum Verfasser nützt nicht dem Buch; aber Fragen muß man beantworten."[100] Johnson's repetition and amplification of Bienek's peripheral "sozusagen" demonstrates this very evasiveness. Furthermore, the author's seeming conflation of description (*Beschreibung*) and narration (*Erzählung*) implies that there may be a certain guile to his pithy responses, particularly as he was a close reader of Lukács well versed in the theorist's distinction between the two forms. Setting aside author interviews and concentrating on the novel itself, it quickly becomes clear that Johnson's suspiciously simplistic description of the narrative situation to Bienek does not accurately capture its full complexity. In the opening sentences, for example, the narrator is clearly

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[98] Horst Bienek, "Werkstattgespräch mit Uwe Johnson. (*Am 3.-5. 1. 1921 in West-Berlin*)," in *»Ich überlege mir die Geschichte…« Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, 199.

[99] P.F. Botheroyd, *Ich und er. First and Third Person Self-Reference and Problems of Identity in Three Contemporary German-Language Novels* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 64.

[100] This citation is taken from a response written by the author to an imaginary interviewer in a fictional interview scenario, which demonstrates Johnson's understanding of the author interview as yet another literary genre rather than an extra-textual source of 'truth.' Uwe Johnson, "Auskünfte und Abreden zu *Zwei Ansichten*. (*Auf Fragen von Mike S. Schoelman*)," in *»Ich überlege mir die Geschichte…« Uwe Johnson im Gespräch*, 89.

not speaking to a group, but is rather writing to an individual reader (*du*). The later statement "So habt ihr gesagt…" (*DBA*, 9) does appear to be addressed to Karsch's West German friends, but *ihr* is otherwise rarely employed at the extradiegetic level, suggesting that the narrator may have separate interlocutors addressed at different times.

The present reading is not meant to offer an alternative interpretation of the narrative situation capable of explaining away all inconsistencies. On the contrary, its purpose is to draw attention to the novel's forestalling of such conclusive interpretations, which matches the author's general preference for process over result, as indicated by his repeated emphasis of "die schwierige Suche nach der Wahrheit" over the truth itself. (BS, 21) To be sure, the novel repeatedly hints at Karsch and the narrator's shared identity. But it also just as frequently intimates their difference. For instance, the novel's opening and conclusion, rather than being bound together in a chain of unbroken circularity, are in fact non-contiguous: as already indicated, the *du* addressed in the beginning and throughout the novel is a reader, whereas the *du* who speaks at the end is a telephone interlocutor.[101] Furthermore, although the narrator insists in occasional asides to the reader that the former's knowledge of Achim's backstory is limited exclusively to the information given to Karsch,[102] the *Erzählebene* frequently strays beyond Karsch's own confined point of view, adopting foreign perspectives and commenting on situations unknowable to the protagonist.[103] In this respect, rather than asserting a relationship of identity between the two figures, it might be more accurate to speak of their commensurability—a relation that, like the one between Achim

[101] A third of the way into the novel, when Karsch considers returning to West Germany and abandoning his project, the fictional reader wonders aloud about the number of pages remaining: "*Und wieso sind es dann noch so eine Masse Seiten?*" (*DBA*, 108)

[102] "[I]ch kann nicht mehr sagen als Achim erzählt hat." (*DBA*, 150)

[103] Colin Riordian concedes this point even after contending that the two figures should be interpreted as the same person: "However, close examination of the text reveals that Karsch does enjoy certain privileges incommensurate with his position as a character in the novel." Colin Riordian, *The Ethics of Narration,* 48.

and the young man in the photograph from the 1953 People's Uprising, does not necessarily constitute identity:

> Und Karin hat ihn erkannt.
> – Die wußte damals nicht mal meinen Namen.
> Weil der in der vordersten Reihe ihm so ähnlich ist wie der aus dem Familienalbum.
> – Ähnlich sieht er mir, der auf dem Bild: sagte Achim
> – Solche wie mich hat es damals nicht wenige gegeben. Aber vor sieben Jahren haben mir ganz andere Leute ähnlich gesehen als gestern. (*DBA*, 295)

Karin identifies Achim by way of inference rather than simple recognition: if the young man in the photo of the uprising resembles Achim to the same degree as the young man identified as Achim in the family photo album, then the former must also be Achim. Achim's response presents a similarly circuitous constellation of resemblances for the purpose of refuting Karin's interpretation. Karsch, as is typical of his liminal position, comes down on neither side, and the novel never conclusively disproves or affirms Karin's thesis. In a similar manner, the narrator and Karsch only appear identical when taken from a distance. Perceived up close, their incongruities become too distinct to ignore.

Thus, in a sense, the boundary between the extra- and intradiegetic levels is upheld. One must admit from a structural perspective the solidity of the border between narrator and protagonist drawn in the novel's opening sentence. However, the bewildering leaps between these levels effectively represent the formal traversal of the novel's diegetic boundaries. The preceding analyses have indicated how such a crossing occurs by means of experimental punctuation and syntax, such as one encounters in the novel's opening paragraph. Moreover, they have shown how instances of free indirect discourse muddy the boundary between narrator and protagonist, as well as between the intra- and metadiegetic plotlines. Before continuing to the novel's unique employment of figurative language, the remainder of this section will focus on a series of scenes from the middle of the novel that blends all three diegetic levels in a particularly intricate and

illuminating manner. They occur in the segment following the interposed question "*Was heißt mit einem Mal: Er war allein?*" (*DBA*, 155), in which the narrator tells of Achim's first youthful flirtations with an East Prussian refugee after the war. The narrator's response opens with an aerial perspective, metaphorically speaking, on Achim's postwar situation, in a manner befitting an orthodox omniscient narrator: "Eine Zeitlang war er allein." (*DBA*, 155) As in previous passages, the discourse gradually transitions from omniscient to personal and the scene becomes increasingly focalized through Achim's individual point of view, to the extent that the reader at one point appears to be peering through the eyes of the fledgling East German cyclist: "Achim hatte schräg vor sich den Nacken eines Mädchens zwischen harten schwarzen Zöpfen. Die Zöpfe zuckten bei schnellen Kopfbewegungen." (*DBA*, 155) The moment of Achim's first encounter with the girl from East Prussia retains this heavy focalization, mobilizing detailed descriptions that draw attention to the observer's specific, circumscribed field of vision: "Als er sich nach einer Weile umwandte, sah er ihre kleine feste Gestalt im Sprung über den Koppelzaun. Die Wegbüsche schnitten den Anstieg aus dem Himmel, ihr überraschender Blick war überschattet vom farbigen Licht des Abends." (*DBA*, 156) This image amounts to a kind of snapshot taken from Achim's perspective, though of course, unlike a photograph, the characterization of the girl's gaze as *überraschend* conveys Achim's affective register as well. The second sentence could thus be read as a brief instance of first-person narration, such that the reader is now effectively taking in the scene from within Achim's mind. As with the description of the braids, so here is the observer identified first, followed immediately thereafter by the object of observation. To extend the photographic analogy to film, one could argue that, in both cases, the progression of these sentences follows the logic of a cinematic eyeline match: the first image identifies and locates the observer while the second aligns the gaze of the reader or spectator with that of the observer.

A subsequent scene, in which a trio of uniformed officers steal Achim's bicycle from the East Prussian girl, seems similarly transmitted through Achim's perspective. But a few subtle differences complicate this interpretation:

> Sie war schon am Ende des Waldstücks vor dem Dorfeingang den langen Berg hinunter, da sah er die drei Uniformierten aus dem Seitenweg kommen. Sie stellten sich quer über den Weg und warteten ihr mit ausgebreiteten Armen entgegen, bremsten sie mit den Händen auf der Lenkstange, ließen sie absteigen und zogen mit dem Rad davon. Das Durcheinander der kleinen schwarzen Gestalten nahm sich von oben zierlich aus im Schnee. Die versuchten zu dritt zu fahren auf Sattel und Querstange und Gepäckträger, sie kamen bis zum Wegknick außer Sicht. Achim lief längst." (*DBA*, 157)

The passage begins from Achim's point of view. The deictic adverb *hinunter* places him at the top of the "long slope" descended by his companion. Therefore, one would likely assume that the following sentences are also focalized through Achim, particularly the description of the "graceful" appearance of the small black figures zigzagging below. However, the final sentence in this passage hints that the perspective, in fact, might not be Achim's own, especially as the placid character of the bird's-eye image clashes with Achim's presumed concern for his friend and his subsequent rush to her aid. Continuing the analogy with continuity editing, it is as if the point-of-view shot of the bike theft is followed by a reaction shot meant to capture the observer's response, but by the time the camera has spun on its axis the observer has already fled the frame. Indeed, it is uncertain to whose perspective the image of the figures in the snow belongs. And this suspicion is further reinforced by another jarring inter-diegetic slip that occurs merely two pages later, in the middle of Achim's reckless departure from the East Prussian girl:

> — Ich besuch dich wirklich: sagte Achim unaufmerksam. Er wußte nicht wohin eigentlich er gehörte, und vielleicht hat er sie nicht ernstnehmen können.
> Du magst es weniger für eine Antwort halten als für eine unentschiedene Zusammensetzung von Ungefährem. Karsch konnte als einzelne Bestandteile benutzen:
> Achims Vater: »Er ist gleich mitgekommen und gern auch. Aber in der ersten Zeit war er recht still. Das kam unterwegs plötzlich als wär ihm was eingefallen.«
> Die Senke des glatten Fußwegs zwischen den Tannen abwärts und die Entlegenheit kleiner Häuser am Waldausgang. Der aus Heu und Sandstaub gemischte Geruch über den

> gewunden ansteigenden Wiesenwegen. Der Anblick einer jungen Frau, die mit zwei Eimern aus dem Anwesen des inzwischen verstorbenen Bauern trat und sich vorbeugend nach ihren Kindern rief. Das Zaungatter, Oberklassenschüler kamen steif und lärmend zwischen den Kindern aus der Grundschule usw. (Besichtigung). (*DBA*, 159)

The four pages preceding this surprising return to the extradiegetic level were almost entirely focalized through Achim. By this point, the reader has likely forgotten that this entire episode with the East Prussian girl is formulated in response to the prodding of the narrator's interlocutor: "*Was heißt mit einem Mal: Er war allein*?" But with the sudden address of the fictional reader, whereupon the latter trades places with Achim's own conversation partner, the narrative shuffles from meta- to extradiegesis.

After this shift, the rest of the section depicts Karsch's intradiegetic gathering of the very realia that embellished the preceding narrative. Here one encounters quotation marks for the first and only time in the novel, each set unambiguously attributing cited statements to different speakers. The presence of this otherwise conspicuously absent punctuation signals the special status of this passage, which offers a behind-the-scenes look into Karsch's compositional technique. The reader rediscovers here, in the notes marked "inspection" (*Besichtigung*)—implying Karsch's personal survey of the town where Achim spent his immediate postwar years—nearly all of the elements that had been fictionally reconfigured and integrated into the retelling of Achim's adolescent romance: the wooded hill's descent (Achim's *hinab* becomes Karsch's *abwärts*), the sloping meadow (Achim: "Die Wegbüsche schnitten den Anstieg aus dem Himmel"; Karsch: "[die] gewundenen ansteigenden Wiesenwegen"), the image of an (overworked) young woman, a fence around grazing grounds. For a reader acquainted with German dialects, the appearance of the northern German word *Knick* ("hedge") in the depiction of the uniformed soldiers' flight might already give a hint as to the image's original source: while Achim grew up in Thuringia and now resides in Saxony, both of which belong to the East Central German dialect

group, Karsch lives in the North German city of Hamburg.[104] From a compositional perspective then, Achim arguably provides Karsch with a narrative instance capable of consolidating Karsch's own isolated observations and fleshing out the recorded statements of friends, family, and fellow GDR citizens. Seen in this light, the reader naturally comes to doubt the historical accuracy of the preceding episode, which is revealed as being spoken in Karsch's tongue and seen through his eyes.

Nevertheless, one must not lose sight of the hermeneutic project at the core of Karsch's biography: to perceive and describe the unfamiliar object—be it Achim, the East German cityscape, or the everyday experiences of East Germans—"von sich aus," and not merely as some complementary Other meant to undergird the stability of one's own position. As one can glean from the passage cited above, Karsch employs a cautious method of evidence collection that takes account of the distortions of memory and media while also recognizing the limitations of his own West German perspective.[105] Walter Schmitz attributes the predominance of pictorial vocabulary in Johnson's work to the author's career-long preoccupation with the epistemological boundary between interpreter and object, which the former sees as calcifying into an impenetrable obstruction at the end of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*:

> [D]as bewährte hermeneutische Prinzip der Sinnvermittlung versagt: Deuter und Gegenstand setzen sich keineswegs ins Einvernehmen. Den Bildvokabeln der Vermittlung ordnet sich, in allen Werken Johnsons, logisch komplementär, handlungslogisch übermächtig, die Motivik des Abstands, der Trennung und der unüberbrückbaren Entfremdung zu.[106]

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[104] *Duden Online*, s.v. "Knick, accessed December 16, 2017, https://www.duden.de/node/737264/revisions/1392642/view.

[105] When devising potential openings for Achim's biography, Karsch considers and then scraps the idea of a fictional beginning with no basis in the empirical reality of the present: "Schließlich widerstrebte es Karsch: dir in halben Worten eines erfundenen Gesprächs und Andeutungen von der Beschaffenheit des Bahnsteigpflasters eine Meinung über die Vorgeschichte der deutschen Verschiedenheiten (und besonders dieser einen) tückisch und heimlich beizubringen, da du sie lieber nehmen solltest aus dem was da ist […]." (*DBA*, 51)

[106] Walter Schmitz, "Grenzreisen: Der hermeneutische Realismus Uwe Johnsons," *Text + Kritik* 65/66 (1980), 38.

At the same time, however, Karsch's process does enact a sort of self-projection into Achim's past experiences, albeit one that is based in methodical research rather than sheer affect—a kind of semi-rational *Sich Hineinversetzen* distinct from the uncritical empathic projection that Brecht treated as the politically reactionary core of naturalist drama.[107] This act is semi-rational as the transposition of the biographer into the mind of his subject does call for the former's activation of biographical material by means of artistic creativity and the imagination. Significantly, it is not precisely the surfacing of the photo from the 1953 uprising that brings Karsch's project to an end, but rather his inability to imagine Achim's alibi:

> – In der Woche war ich im Training: fügte Achim hinzu.
> In jener Woche war er im Training. Er war nicht einmal in der Nähe der Stadt.
> – Richtig: sagte Achim. – Auf einem kaputten Truppenübungsplatz, an der See, verstehen Sie?
> Zum Beispiel an der See [...] wo jetzt noch junge Männer in blauen Trainingsanzügen zwischen ihnen Achim da der Lange siehst du doch siehst du nicht.
> – Na? sagte Achim.
> – Ich kann es mir nicht vorstellen: sagte Karsch.
> – Du hast dir so viel vorstellen können: hielt Achim überrascht ihm vor. Er umfaßte ihn mit einem raschen aufgewachten Blick. (*DBA*, 295-6)

For those who read Achim as little more than a cynical opportunist, his final remark in this passage rings out with sinister irony and almost constitutes an open admission of disingenuousness toward Karsch. However, for those who take seriously the novel's central hermeneutic problem, which thereby cannot be flatly dismissed as a mere pretext for political chicanery, the faltering of Karsch's imagination amounts to a breakdown in at least one case of inter-German contact. And in fact, Achim's surprised reaction appears to indicate genuine disappointment rather than the frustration of a failed deception.

[107] "Man nannte diesen Stil den Naturalismus, weil er die menschliche Natur natürlich, d.h. unvermittelt, so wie sie sich gab (phonetisch) darstellte. […] Und das »Milieu als Schicksal« erzeugte Mitleid, jenes Gefühl, das »man« hat, wenn man nicht helfen kann und wenigstens im Geiste »mit« - »leidet«." Bertolt Brecht, "Die Dialektische Dramatik," in *Schriften*, vol. 6 of *Ausgewählte Werke in sechs Bänden* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 129.

However, if Karsch's inability to visualize Achim's training session signals the collapse of a communicative link between a citizen of the FRG and a citizen of the GDR respectively, then what should one make of the moments where Karsch effectively abolishes the aforementioned separation between interpreter and object and transports himself wholly into Achim's individual perspective? Are these themselves not instances of an intercultural and interpersonal border crossing? Holger Helbig posits this thesis for the relationship between the narrator and the protagonist, characterizing their apparent merger at the novel's end as a *Grenzüberschreitung*: "Überschritten wird eine Grenze, die nichts anderes als der Text selbst ist, der Schritt führt aus der Welt, *in* der erzählt wird, in die Welt, *von* der erzählt wird."[108] In like manner, particularly as the relationship between Karsch and Achim is structurally parallel to the one between the narrator and Karsch, the narrative transposition from Karsch's to Achim's point of view enacts a similar *Grenzüberschreitung*, albeit one with clearer political implications; the two figures belong to separate sides of the "Ordnungen, nach denen heute in der Welt gelebt werden kann," as Johnson put it in "Berliner Stadtbahn." (BS, 10) Naturally, this perspectival shift runs the risk of being little more than a well-intended yet incognizant projection, erasing the unmistakable difference between the two German states in the manner of the aforementioned epithets attributed to Johnson. But it also occasionally succeeds in overcoming this boundary drawn between the two ideological regimes, at least at an individual level. Johnson indicated in an English-language interview that, paradoxically, *Das dritte Buch über Achim*—though a description of a failed biographical project—nevertheless still contains within it the life it is struggling to describe: "*The Third Book About Achim* is only a presentation of the West German's attempt to describe—so that the life of

[108] Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 92.

the East German is contained in this description of an attempt to give a description."[109] Of course, statements made by Johnson in interviews must be taken with a grain of salt, as suggested previously. However, Achim himself makes a similar claim toward the end of the novel, after Karsch has already decided to drop the project:

> Achim schien es zu bedauern. Sie redeten einander nun noch mit du an für eine Viertelstunde. Sie fragten einer den andern ob er das Gefühl von Schade kenne, kennst du
> – Schade, und
> – Vielleicht hätt ich das Buch gern lesen mögen, es war doch wirklich über mich. (*DBA*, 296-7)

Since it follows a protracted, climactic debate in which the two men become more and more estranged and increasingly adopt the stereotypical stances of their respective nations, the reciprocity of this denouement is all the more striking. And with the heightened, biblical-style phrase "Sie fragten einer den andern," Johnson temporarily makes use of a conciliatory idiom that abolishes the separation between the two men.[110] They act in tandem and are both, in equal parts, self and other. Moreover, this atmosphere of reconciliation is further supported by their continued use of the informal *du* form; for the majority of the novel, they address each other as *Sie*. For a novel intended to demonstrate the irreconcilable separation between the two German states, the scene following the narrative confirmation of this theme is one of surprising intimacy. And Achim's admission that Karsch's biography, as opposed to the two official East German biographies, was "really" about him hints at the possibility of a connection between the two men that might effectively overstep the ideological and discursive limitations of their respective states.

[109] Michael Roloff, "An Interview with Uwe Johnson," *Metamorphosis* 3 (1962), 41.

[110] In their commentary on the novel, Katja Leuchtenberger and Friederike Schneider highlight the many instances of biblical rhetoric and phrasing that appear in *Das dritte Buch*, such as in the recurring expression "ein Mensch guten Willens." Katja Leuchtenberger and Friederike Schneider, "Sachkommentar," in *Das dritte Buch über Achim. Rostocker Ausgabe*, 435-6. For more on biblical language in Johnson's oeuvre, see Paul Onasch, "Biblische Diskurse in den Romanen Uwe Johnsons" (PhD diss., Universität Rostock, 2018).

## VI. Figurative Language as *Grenzverschiebung*

Karsch's temporary overcoming of the experiential gap between himself, a West German citizen, and Achim effectively crosses both the inner German border and the text-immanent boundary between the intradiegetic and the metadiegetic levels of the novel. The following section will focus on the other partition invoked in the novel's opening sentence, namely the communicative gap between the narrator and the fictional reader/interlocutor. As opposed to the clear political and ideological distance between Karsch and Achim, which remains latent throughout the majority of the novel but then distinctly comes to the fore in their final heated debate, the degree of separation between the narrator and their interlocutor is harder to determine. As discussed previously, the narrator could be Karsch himself, but it could also simply be someone familiar with the details of his trip. The identity of the addressed *du* proves similarly difficult to pin down; as previously indicated, it could be a reader or a conversational interlocutor, a group or an individual. Nevertheless, it is safe to assume that the fictional reader is not a resident of East Germany, as they appear unfamiliar enough with the GDR to pose questions like "*Wie war es denn da?*" and to require basic information about figures presumably widely known to GDR citizens, such as Achim himself. And at the very least, the narrator bears the burden of conveying experiences and describing objects that the fictional reader has not encountered in their everyday life in West Germany, as the novel's protracted third sentence suggests:

> Dennoch würde ich am liebsten beschreiben daß die Grenze lang ist und drei Meilen vor der Küste anfängt mit springenden Schnellbooten, junge Männer halten sie in den Ferngläsern, scharf geladene Geschütze reichen bis zu dem Stacheldrahtzaun, der heranzieht zum freundlichen Strand der Ostsee, in manchen frei gelegenen Dörfern auf der einen Seite waren die Kirchtürme von Lübeck zu sehen der anderen Seite, zehn Meter breit aufgepflügt drängt der Kontrollstreifen in den eigens gerodeten Wald, die Karrenwege und Trampelpfade sind eingesunken und zugewachsen, vielleicht sollte ich blühende Brombeerranken darüberhängen lassen, so könntest du es dir am Ende vorstellen. (*DBA*, 7)

The long-winded excess of detail in this hypothetical description clearly conveys an effort on the narrator's part to help the fictional reader visualize or "imagine" the likely unfamiliar objects of description. As can be surmised from the former's struggle to render the scene transparent for the spatially and temporally distant addressee, they are faced with the same dilemma that plagued the author of "Berliner Stadtbahn," to wit, the lack of an experiential and conceptual common ground between author and reader in the face of such extraordinary historical circumstances.

In the case of *Das dritte Buch*, this gap becomes all the more pronounced as the addressee is a citizen of the Federal Republic, implying a prejudicial attitude toward the East disseminated, or at least fortified, by West German film, television, and other mediating images and descriptions. And in fact, there appears to be a certain expectation on the part of the West German reader for a suspenseful and exciting portrayal of East German political intrigues and surveillance. When the narrator gives a mundane description of Karin's meeting with Achim's father, the fictional reader/interlocutor gives air to their disappointment with the as-yet-unstimulating character of the narrative: "*Es ist so gar nicht spannend!*" (*DBA*, 141) The narrator responds to this statement of protest with yet another subjunctive scenario, in which two mysterious men visit Karsch in the room he has subleased from an elderly widow:

> Sehr aufregend könnte an Frau Liebenreuths Klingelknopf eine sauber um den Nagel gerundete Fingerspitze erschienen sein, die mit Druck und Senkung den offenen Stromkreis schließt und auf der anderen Seite regelmäßige Schläge der Hammerfeder gegen eine isoliert aufgehängte Glockenscheibe auslöst: das bekannte Klingelrasseln dröhnt durch den düsteren Flur, der noch leer zwischen den geschlossenen Türen steht, und endet so entschieden wie es begann. (*DBA*, 141)

The overabundance of adjectives in this opening to a rather stereotypical scene of East German political intimidation, which provides the reader with the desired *Spannung* ("suspense" or "voltage") in more ways than one, harkens back to the subjunctive sentence at the novel's beginning. The description of the security and natural conditions along the German-German

border, though rich with evocative detail, is nevertheless simultaneously rife with cliché.[111] The scene may be personally unfamiliar to the reader, but its components are recognizable from West German literary, cinematic, and journalistic representations of the East, as both the narrator and Karsch acknowledge at various points in the novel:

> […] ich hatte ja nichts im Sinn als einen telefonischen Anruf, der nicht als Kundenwunsch erledigt sein sollte vor dem Westdeutschland-Schrank des Fernamtes mit der Stimme des Mädchens, das den Kunden zum Warten abhängt, die Leitstelle ruft und sagt: Gib mir Hamburg. Hamburg – und nach einer Weile eine von den Leitungen in die gewünschte Kontaktbuchse stecken kann, ich habe das selbst gesehen, *es wird auch in Filmen gezeigt* [...]. (*DBA*, 8, my emphasis)

> Die ostdeutsche Grenzpolizei bedeutete ihm geübt und nachsichtig daß er ohne Umweg und Abweichung das Ziel seiner Reise (ich möchte eine alte Freundin wiedersehen) aufzusuchen habe; [...]. Er verstand ihr dünnes sportliches Lächeln. *Die Uniformen kannte er nur aus Filmen*. (*DBA*, 10, my emphasis)

> Denn als die munteren vorschriftsmäßigen Soldaten an der Grenze ihm den Ausweis abgeschrieben zurückreichten […], da standen die dicken listigen Männer vor ihm auf, vor denen Bücher Filme Zeitungen ihm abgeraten hatten zu Hause; [...]. So äußerte er sich gegen Karin träumerisch über die denkbare Bauart der Karteikästen im Amt für die Meldung auswärtiger Besucher, er hatte auch Freude an der Erfindung einer Lesemaschine aus Stahl und edlen Hölzern, […]. Sie fuhr wild und heftig auf ihn los. – Sei nicht so eingebildet! sagte sie: Sei nicht so nervös! (*DBA*, 24-5)

Judging from these examples, West German depictions of East German life seems to center on technology, security, and administration, leaving the domain of everyday life generally un- or underrepresented. It is thus no surprise that Karsch's imagination, like that of the narrator, "dreamily" drifts toward surveillance procedures, and Karin's reproach could in equal measure be leveled at the intrigue-hungry (fictional) reader.

However, this is not to say that the novel's third sentence is merely intended as a sendup of conventional West German depictions of East Germany and the inner German border. The previous analysis already indicated the significance of the imagination for Karsch's biographical

[111] Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 21

project. In a similar manner, the narrator seems equally concerned with the reader's ability to visualize the scenes portrayed, as the image of the "blooming bramble vines" conveys.[112] Maurice Haslé has noted that the detailed description is necessary for the reader to have a precise material impression of the border that ultimately serves as the novel's central metaphor: "First, it reminds the reader of the material conditions of the border. This reminder is necessary because anyone lacking *an exact idea* of this border will hardly be able to understand why such a difference prevails on both sides of the inner German border."[113] The opening description of the German-German border thus walks the line between a suspense-generating stereotype and an exacting illustration of a controversial object subject to varying portrayals in the politically fraught era of the fifties and early sixties. The following two sentences continue this stoking of the reader's imagination, momentarily transporting them into the position of the protagonist:

> Dann hätte ich dir beschrieben die Übergänge für den Verkehr auf der Straße auf Schienen in der Luft: was du sagen mußt bei den Kontrollen (und was man dir sagt) auf der einen und der anderen Seite, wie die Baracken unterschiedlich aussehen und die Posten unähnlich grüßen und das schreckhafte Gefühl der fremden Staatlichkeit, das sogar Karsch anfiel beim Überfahren des Zwischenraums, obwohl er doch schon oft in fremden Ländern gewesen war ohne auch nur ihre Sprache zu haben. Aber der und sein Aussehen und der Grund seiner Reise sind bisher weniger wichtig als der naturhaft plötzliche Abbruch der Straßen an Erdwällen oder in Gräben oder vor Mauern; ich gebe zu: ich bin um Genauigkeit verlegen. (*DBA*, 7-8)

The polysyndeton of these sentences ("und…und…und"; "oder…oder") traces a kind of zigzag motion across the border terrain, one that appears to simultaneously home in on and move away from the object in question. The scattered progression of this depiction culminates in the narrator's

[112] Alexandra Kleihues also highlights the thematic importance of *Vorstellbarkeit* in her treatment of the novel as an example of documentary fiction. Alexandra Kleihues, *Medialität der Erinnerung*, 68-73.

[113] "D'abord il rappelle au lecteur les conditions matérielles de la frontière ; ce rappel est nécessaire car celui qui ne se fait pas *une idée exacte* de cette frontière ne peut guère comprendre pourquoi une telle différence règne de part et d'autre de la frontière interallemande." Maurice Haslé, "L'appréhension de la réalité dans l'œuvre de Uwe Johnson: Étude de sa première manière" (PhD diss., Université de Rennes, 1978), 183, my emphasis. Cited in Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 22.

sheepish admission of descriptive inadequacy. The seemingly evasive "precision" (*Genauigkeit*), which might lead to the reader's understanding or envisaging of the conditions along the border, has not been attained, despite the narrator's best efforts. As already stated, the intradiegetic transborder telephone call mentioned in the opening sentence can be read as parallel to the narrator's invocation of the reader, such that the communicative distance between speaker and audience is interpreted as a discursive counterpart to the ten-meter swathe sliced between the two German nations. In this regard, "precision" might represent the bridging of this discursive gap. The reader successfully envisions the scene portrayed and the rift between addresser and addressee is effectively surmounted. But *Genauigkeit* proves a more nuanced term than the mere realization of quantitative accuracy or the exhaustive description of an unfamiliar object.

As indicated in the preceding analysis of "Berliner Stadtbahn," Johnson's preoccupation with language is inherently oriented toward its value as a means of communication, as a tool for coaxing a desired response in the addressee. And in this passage, the narrator appears distinctly fixated on the imagined impact of his description upon the reader. However, the presumed effects appear to emerge from two seemingly contradictory approaches to influencing the reader. The first and second sentences present a handling of the reader akin to the famous Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* in its jarring into awareness of the addressee and its self-reflexive foregrounding of stylistic incongruities. However, the remainder of the passage hails the reader by way of imaginative depictions and emotional identification with the protagonist, in line with a more affect-oriented poetics. In a sense, what the extradiegetic figure of the reader is meant to experience here is a push-pull dynamic consisting of, on the one hand, alienation and an appeal to reason, by which they are essentially driven away from the novel's content into the position of a distanced observer; and on the other hand, an evocative overture to the reader's emotions, by which

they are drawn into the story's action, as if crossing from the extraliterary world into the novel's domain and assuming the role of one of its characters. One mode should absorb the reader into the work's diegetic field while the other is meant to keep them at bay, forcing them to acknowledge the fundamental non-equivalence between the intradiegetic space of the literary universe and that of extradiegetic reality.

This play of proximity and distance, of allure and impediment, might be read as a correlative to the author-narrator's subsequent characterization of *Genauigkeit*, which seems to contain within it the same paradoxical combination of isotopy and exotopy. After conceding shortcomings with regard to "precision," the narrator attempts to elucidate their understanding of the term:

> Ich meine nicht die Zahl von zehn Metern, es können ja sieben sein unter dem Schnee oder unter der ersten wärmenden Sonne, die aus dem aufgerissenen Boden einen grünen Flaum unnützer Keime holt, ich meine: der Boden soll in ausreichender Breite locker sein, damit Schritte erkennbar sind und verfolgt werden können und noch angehalten. Nun erwarte von mir nicht den Namen und Lebensumstände für eine wilde dahinstürzende Gestalt im kalten Morgennebel und kleine nasse Erdklumpen, die unter ihren Tritten auffliegen, wieder reißt der stille Waldrand unter menschlichen Sprüngen auf, eifriges dummes Hundegebell, amtliche Anrufe, keuchender Atem, ein Schuß, unversehens fällt jemand hin, das wollte ich ebenso wenig wie der Schütze es am besten behaupten sollte gegen Ende seines Lebens; […]. Du wirst aus unserem Mißverständnis mit dem Flüchtenden und den Schüssen im Morgengrauen ersehen können welche Art von Genauigkeit ich meine; ich meine die Grenze: die Entfernung: den Unterschied. (*DBA*, 8–9)

As suggested previously, *Genauigkeit*, as the narrator understands it, does not refer to quantitative exactitude. In fact, it seems to represent quite the opposite of what one generally associates with this term, namely measurements or statistical data. The narrator does not justify their refusal to provide concrete information on the fleeing figure, but if they share any similarities with the author himself one can assume that their refusal amounts to a rejection of the same faux-objective journalistic methods decried in "Berliner Stadtbahn." Instead of providing an explicit, conceptual definition of exactitude, the narrator launches into an object lesson or performative explanation.

Utterance of the word *Genauigkeit* appears to almost inadvertently trigger a stream of lucid imagery not unlike the previous description of the demarcation line. The hypothetical, fabricated quality of this scene, in which, not without reason, the narrator equates themselves with the fictional gunman, harkens back to the "blühende Brombeerranken" that they consider hanging over the overgrown cart path to help the reader better envision the unfamiliar restricted zone.

With regard to the unquestionable impact of anti-GDR clichés on the fictional West German reader, capacity to elicit lively, stereotype-shattering imagery proves essential to bridging the communicative gap between the narrator and the reader, a rift greatly reinforced, in this instance, by the discrepancy between the two distinct discourses found on either side of the German-German border. This particular aspect of *Genauigkeit*, as the narrator suggestively defines it here, appears aligned with the "precise comparison" (*genauer Vergleich*) identified previously as the operation elicited by spaces of transcultural collision. As Johnson suggested in "Berlin Railway," the *Vergleich* emerges in zones of contact, where the non-equivalence between two separate domains is superseded by a crossing between them. Comparisons establish homogeneity between previously isolated items or domains that might have been perceived as discontinuous or lacking in an overarching context. And while the comparison of various distinct items may result in the determination of difference, this differentiation still relies on a shared basis of comparison, a *tertium comparationis* that binds the items together by means of a common quality. Within the context of Johnson's work, one can easily imagine why the act of comparing seems to arise of necessity at checkpoints, border stations, and other transfer zones, as these spaces are themselves structurally akin to the basic function of the *Vergleich*: Both build continuums where division and incohesion might otherwise hold sway.

Nevertheless, Johnson's run-on paragraph does not conclude with the felicitous union of narrator and reader, but with the acknowledgement of an (albeit shared) misunderstanding (*Mißverständnis*), of a missed connection at the extradiegetic level. Rather than ending this opening with an invocation of commonality and connectedness—between narrator and reader, GDR and FRG—, the narrator simultaneously emphasizes the fundamental difference (*Unterschied*) and distance between each of these pairs of terms. The importance of this statement to the work as a whole is underlined by its slightly altered reiteration in the book's concluding paragraph: "Die Personen sind erfunden. Die Ereignisse beziehen sich nicht auf ähnliche sondern auf die Grenze: den Unterschied: die Entfernung / und den Versuch sie zu beschreiben." (*DBA*, 301) In a playful distortion of the boilerplate legal disclaimer found at the beginning of fictional reworkings of real events,[114] the narrator suggests that the difference or figurative "border" described in the preceding three hundred pages is of a more fundamental nature than the distinction one might draw from a simple comparison of two unlike objects. At several points in the novel, the protagonist Karsch contrasts the act of differentiation (*unterscheiden*) to comparison (*vergleichen*) in his attempts to orient himself in the unfamiliar East German landscape:

> Karsch wollte eigentlich hinaus auf die Ähnlichkeit aller Städte seiner Welt, sie erinnerten im äußeren Bild von Reklameplakaten und Inhalt der Schaufenster und Form der Autos und Benehmen der Kellner so sehr an einander, daß er da bald von diesen Ähnlichkeiten abgesehen hatte und zu anderen Vergleichen hin; hier aber an dieser Straßenecke überlaufen von den Gruppen und Paaren der Theaterbesucher, […] hier offenbar aß und trank man nicht das selbe, es wurde mit anderen Mitteln gewaschen, es gab andere Mengen und Arten von Autos, […]. – Selten also: sagte Karsch: könne er sich erinnert fühlen an die gemeinsame Vorgeschichte der beiden deutschen Staaten. Anfangs nämlich war er nach dem Straßenbild gegangen und hatte kurz und knapp zensiert: dies sei einförmiger, da hatten sie ihn ausgelacht; inzwischen verglich er nicht mehr sondern versuchte zu unterscheiden wie das wirtschaftliche Gesetz im Aussehen der Straßen erschien […]. (*DBA*, 22–23)

[114] "Die Handlung und alle handelnden Personen sind frei erfunden. Jegliche Ähnlichkeit mit lebenden oder realen Personen wären rein zufällig."

This passage, the second half of which was cited in the previous section, touches upon one of the major problems of the novel, namely the incapacity of the outside observer to comprehend or come to terms with the object of observation, be it a cityscape, a gesture, or the seemingly hermetic private life of a public individual. And this investigation is not only concerned with a kind of hermeneutics of difference. It also constitutes part of the novel's poetological dimension, as demonstrated by Karsch's conversation with Herr Fleisg, the editor of Leipzig's local paper:

> – Sie sind doch schon über eine Woche hier: sagte er.
> – Wie sind Ihre Eindrücke?
> – Ich sehe ja immer nur das Straßenbild: antwortete Karsch […].
> Herr Fleisg hatte zurückgelehnt ihm zugesehen, nun aber in einem Zug fuhr er vorwärts, ruckte unruhig, kippte sein langes Nasenbein. – Selbstverständlich: stimmte er zu. Es klang begeistert. – Sie müßten die Oberfläche des Straßenbildes abheben können! Das Wichtigste geschieht unter ihr! (*DBA*, 39)

Ulrich Fries has identified this final statement as a modified citation of Lenin originally made in praise of Tolstoy's realism, which later became a foundation of the Soviet Union's cultural policy during the thirties.[115] Interestingly, this purportedly realist aspiration to "lift the surface of the cityscape" in order to glimpse the driving social, economic, and political mechanisms beneath represents one of the instances of overlap between the orthodox Socialist Realist doctrine and the West German journalist Karsch.[116]

The key difference lies, however, in the latter's willingness to concede the difficulties posed by such a method, acknowledging the sometimes insurmountable cultural and epistemological barriers lodged between subject and object. In the previously cited passage, Karsch proceeds from a hypothesis of at least superficial similarity (*Ähnlichkeit*) between all cities,

[115] Ulrich Fries, "Überlegungen zu Johnsons zweitem Buch," 222–23.

[116] For more on the metaphor of the *Straßenbild* in *Das dritte Buch*, see Christoph Pflaumbaum, "Unverstandene Straßenbilder. Beschreibung der Außenwelt als Kennzeichen der Fremderfahrung in Uwe Johnsons *Das dritte Buch über Achim*," Johnson-Jahrbuch 14 (2007), 24-47.

only to concede the exceptional status of the present one, an observation sealed by the repetition of the adjective *anders* in the protagonist's description of cultural differences (here relayed in free indirect speech), as opposed to the expected affinities. His attempt at a peremptory comparison between the respective cityscapes of the GDR and the FRG is laughed off by his East German acquaintances, leading him to renounce the act of *vergleichen* in favor of *unterscheiden*, which discerns underlying economic laws in the city's appearance or, to put it differently, "lift[s] the surface of the cityscape." As opposed to comparing, for Karsch *unterscheiden* appears to presuppose the entirely unique nature of the object of observation that can only be grasped on its own terms: "[Karsch] war sicher daß er nichts verstehen werde mit Vergleichen […]: dies war etwas für sich allein und zu erfassen nur von sich aus; er kannte es nicht." (*DBA*, 21) Nevertheless, as the subject of a different culture, the West German protagonist necessarily finds himself limited in his capacity to approach this new culture in and of itself, as indicated by his inability to "find his way into" the language of the GDR, be it in an official or informal capacity: "er fand sich nicht in die Sprache des Landes." (*DBA*, 19)

Returning to the novel's opening, one recognizes that the precision sought after by the narrator represents the simultaneous upholding of these two principles of comparison and distinction. Or, to put it differently, this idiosyncratic conception of precision overcomes the purported binary established by Karsch in his attempt to come to terms with his new environment. Precision must therefore be conceived not so much as a fixed point, as one would assume in conjunction with mathematical definitions of precision, but rather as a swing motion or *Schaukelbewegung* between two seemingly disjunctive methods of interpretation. On the one hand, the desire to adequately transmit the unfamiliar scenario to the reader leads to the narrator's employment of the *Vergleich*, which constructs a kind of communicational continuum between

addresser and addressee. However, this connection between the comparison and its object, formed in light of the experiential rift between narrator and reader, reveals itself to be little more than a relationship of adequacy when analyzed from the vantage of the object itself. In this regard, comparison might be interpreted as a mode of neglecting the object in its distinct richness and diversity. As a logical operation, comparison isolates the property or set of properties that one object shares with another, which thereby constitutes the *tertium comparationis*. But in doing so it also brackets off a host of other qualities that do not serve the comparison. It constitutes a highly selective mode of perception and communication that requires differentiation to return a degree of autonomy and distinctness to the individual objects of comparison.

The selectiveness of comparison as a means of coming to terms with an unfamiliar object, which calls for the disregard of certain features incommensurable with the familiar object, is not unlike the selectiveness that Achim exercises toward his own biographical material. Not only do East German functionaries attempt to shepherd Karsch's portrayal toward a positive depiction of GDR society, but Achim himself also places considerable constraints on the protagonist's work, particularly as Karsch begins to dig up unsavory details inconsistent with the cyclist's public image, to say nothing of the latter's self-image:

> Was am Ende bei Karsch stand auf dem Papier und käuflich wurde als Achims Leben in Worten: das sollte ihn zeigen wie er sich neuerlich verstand. […] Wer ihm zujubelte am Rand der Straße oder ihn unterwies in den Fragen der staatlichen Wohlfahrt oder ihm Ehe Verehrung Nachfolge anbot in Briefen mengenhaft, der sollte aber Den meinen von heute in grauem Anzug in ehrendem Empfang bei der Macht des Staates und in lächelnder Verbeugung und beim kameradschaftlichen Händedruck den, der gern mit Notwendigkeit gekommen sein wollte durch die Zeit hierher aber nicht durch Zufall und bloß überredet dazu. Zu ihm, der Geld nahm vom Sachwalter und Orden und Vergünstigung in allen Behelfen des Lebens, paßte nun nicht mehr der vergangene Tag, an dem er dies Geld verschleppte wie Abfall, an dem er eigensüchtig gewesen war und mißtrauisch gegen sein Land als würde es niemals Rennräder kaufen für ihn und schließlich auch bauen für ihn. Er wollte nicht der sein, der roh und gern im alten und zerschlagenen Verband der staatlichen Jugend, das streichen Sie mal; […] das wollte er von seinen Wahrheiten, und ihm gehörten sie wohl. (*DBA*, 212-14)

Karsch has uncovered Achim's involvement in the depraved actions of the Hitler Youth, referred to here euphemistically and ironically as the "shattered Organization of State-Run Youth," and Achim himself has begrudgingly admitted the illegal purchase of a West German bicycle with East German currency during an excursion in West Berlin. Neither of these circumstances is in keeping with Achim's understanding of himself. And his sudden order to Karsch to discard these incompatible elements ("das streichen Sie mal") unveils his attitude as downright censorial. Of course, Achim's self-image is not drawn from a position of autonomous interiority; it is tightly bound up with the role and function that he performs in the public eye. Achim's life story should proceed in lockstep with the GDR's own founding mythology and its disacknowledgment of any continuity whatsoever with the Nazi regime.

Achim's personal history and the ideal history of the East German state are meant to be bound together by way of an underlying *Ähnlichkeit*, with all the incomparable features trimmed away. As Herr Fleisg suggests to Karsch in their initial meeting, the ideal biography of the East German athlete would be less of a biography in the modern socio-psychological sense and more of an exhortative political hagiography: "Sei Achim doch ein Sinnbild für die Kraft und Zukünftigkeit des Landes. In Herrn Karsch jedoch treffe die westdeutsche Publizistik auf dies Sinnbild." (*DBA*, 40) What Fleisg proposes is, in effect, a kind of mediating chain: Achim's story should serve as a symbol for the political prowess of the East German state, and Karsch's West German packaging of the allegorical biography should convey this prowess to the West German press.[117] Interestingly, Fleisg's use of the loaded literary term *Sinnbild* calls up another dimension of the word *Vergleich*, namely its status as a rhetorical trope, which is still closely related to the

[117] Ulrich Fries also underlines the instrumentalization of Achim as an allegory by GDR functionaries. Ulrich Fries, "Uberlegungen zu Johnsons zweitem Buch," 216.

logical operation of comparison. In its rhetorical sense, *Vergleich* can be used as an umbrella term to refer to various types of figurative language. According to the *Metzler Lexikon Literatur*, the word can be used to refer to simile, metaphor, or allegory in equal measure:

> Die Uneigentlichkeit des tropischen V[ergleich]s wird nicht nur durch die kategoriale Verschiedenartigkeit der verglichenen Bereiche gewährleistet (»Mein Gemüt brennt heiß wie Kohle«; Erich Mühsam: »Symbole«), sondern häufig außerdem durch die Aussparung des Tertium Comparationis (»Das Leben liegt in aller Herzen / Wie in Särgen«; E. Lasker-Schüler: »Weltende«). Ein Text oder ein Textteil, in dem der V. das strukturell wichtigste Element ist, heißt ›Gleichnis‹."[118]

Fleisg does not use the word *Gleichnis*, but this term can be seen as a synonym for *Sinnbild*, which possesses nearly the same denotational range as the *Vergleich.* Taken to mean emblem or allegory, the characterization of Achim as a *Sinnbild* emphasizes the reduction of his naturally contradictory biography to the status of an unproblematic, didactic hieroglyph. His figurative quality effectively erases his individuality and autonomy. Singularity yields to similitude.

Naturally, conceptions of metaphor, along with tropes in general, can differ widely from author to author. In none of his essays, articles, or interviews does Johnson give the impression of having possessed a systematic theory of metaphor. Nor does he appear to have followed the contemporaneous development of theories of metaphor by language philosophers like Max Black or Monroe Beardsley or by linguists such as Roman Jakobson. However, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* does display a complicated and, to some degree, contradictory approach to and employment of tropic language. First of all, it is worth noting that the narrator of *Das dritte Buch* frequently draws attention to the metaphors they use, often calling them by name and explicitly alerting the reader to the figurativeness of certain formulations:

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[118] "Vergleich," in *Metzler Lexikon Literatur: Begriffe und Definitionen*, ed. Dieter Burdorf, Christoph Fasbender, & Burkhard Moennighoff, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2007), 802. The description of metaphor as "leaving out the *tertium comparationis*" is repeated in the lexicon's definition of the *Vergleichstheorie* of metaphor: "Metapher als verkürzter Vergleich mit zu erschließendem Tertium Comparationis […]." "Metapher," in Ibid., 494.

> Der Zusammenbruch der nordamerikanischen Wirtschaft lief mit kurzen schweren Flutwellen in Europa und Deutschland aus und schwemmte viele Arbeitnehmer aus dem Verdienst, das ist ein Vergleich, sog die Preise des Lebens auf wachsende Wellenkämme, wusch jede Zuversicht auf den kommenden Tag aus dem Gefühl des Daseins und würde heil lassen und höflich umspülen nur die rustizierten Mauern, in denen das Geld saß in ungerechter Massigkeit und lebte und wuchs von der Kraft derer, die Gerät und Nahrung des Lebens dennoch herstellten in acht Stunden täglicher Arbeit? (*DBA*, 47)

After deciding that he will take on the biographical project, Karsch deliberates over various potential openings to the book. One possibility that strikes him initially is the idea of a fictional discussion between strangers in a train car on the year of Achim's birth, and the above-cited passage would serve as an historical introduction to that expositional conversation. Even if the final question mark were not there to awaken the reader's skepticism as to the reliability of this description and its fitness as an opening, the absurdity of the extended metaphor itself would already indicate the narrator's ironic distance from this ideologically and rhetorically suspect statement. The metaphor of the financial fallout of Black Tuesday inundating the European markets like "short heavy flood waves" not only offers up a particularly colorful image in antiquated language evoking its biblical prototype. It also serves as an example of the kind of figurativity that Johnson saw as a pernicious trait of GDR political speech, as he once explained in an interview with Reinhard Baumgart:

> Es gibt so eine Vergleichssucht in manchen schriftstellerischen Werken, und in einem Falle ging es um einen bestimmten Sprachstil, nämlich den Sprachstil ostdeutscher Funktionäre, die ganz alltägliche Sachen ausschmücken und vergleichen. Dazu benutzte ich Ausdrücke wie den von der »Gischt des täglichen Lebens« und gab sofort zu: das ist ein Vergleich, um auf das etwas Unklare solcher Redeweise hinzuweisen.[119]

As if trying his hand at the political allegory proposed by Fleisg, the language of Karsch's first attempt at a narrative beginning is couched in the rhetorical grandiosity and metaphorical obscurity typical of GDR functionaries. The satirical quality of this passage gives voice to a certain distrust

[119] Reinhard Baumgart, "Uwe Johnson im Gespräch. (*Am 2. 8. 1967 in München*)," in *»Ich überlege mir die Geschichte...«*, 228.

or, at the very least, skepticism toward metaphoricity, which, rather than revealing objects, events, or individuals in their most essential form, often ends up concealing them.

It is a cautious attitude toward figurative language and tropes that author, narrator, and protagonist appear to share. With respect to Achim as a *Sinnbild*, at numerous points in the novel Karsch states his determination to provide the fullest possible depiction of the cyclist's backstory. In fact, he himself uses the term *Sinnbild* on only one occasion, and in a different sense than likely intended by Fleisg. Having accompanied Achim to a race in Prague and presented him with an early draft of the biography, the West German journalist suffers through the latter's editorial critique while hiding from sports fans in an art museum. After discussing the scene in which Achim passes the cycling tryouts, Karsch ponders the episode's relevance vis-à-vis the early history of the GDR:

> [N]och jedoch begriff er nicht was Achim vorschlug zu dem Rad aus Westberlin: sei diese ungleiche Fahrt nicht ein Sinnbild gewesen für die unterschiedliche Erholung der westdeutschen und ostdeutschen Wirtschaft, erst arbeiten dann essen, und jetzt bauen wir solche Maschinen auch wie es sie im Westen gleich nach dem Krieg wieder gab, Achim als Achim und Sinnbild über altersschwach knackende Technik gebückt [...]." (*DBA*, 180)

In the context of Achim's victorious race on an old East German single-speed against a boastful youth on a West German three-speed, the image of "Achim als Achim und Sinnbild über altersschwach knackende Technik gebückt" lends an unmistakable corporeality to the young cyclist while simultaneously hinting at his symbolic significance. He is, at the same time, fleshly body and immaterial symbol. Naturally, the theoretical resonance of the word *Sinnbild* is amplified by the setting of the men's conversation: they are discussing Karsch's draft in what is likely the Prague National Gallery. Significantly, a few pages earlier the narrator, in briefly adopting the perspective of a museum guard to provide a physical description of the meeting, employs the adverbial form of the aforementioned term: "Der eine, der Stehende, [Achim, X.H.] redete

ziemlich schnell auf den anderen ein, schlug sich sinnbildlich vor die Stirn, wollte den Sitzenden an den Oberarm hineinrütteln in die eigene Auffassung." (*DBA*, 174) Perceived from the guard's point of view, one realizes that Karsch and Achim's discussion, as well as the former's subsequent meditation on Achim's symbolism, occurs among objects of artistic significance and their studious observers:

> [S]elbst nachdenkliche Museumswächter, die ihr weißes Haar und Würde im Umgang mit so schwierigen Gegenständen wie Gemälden und Galeriebesuchern erworben haben, werden vorüberschreitend nicht für gewiß nehmen mögen ob die zögernde Auslassung des einen im Gesicht des andern den Ausdruck unmissverständlicher Auffassung hervorbringt oder hervorgebracht hat. (*DBA*, 168)

For the Czech museum guards, presumably lacking knowledge of the German language, the figurative quality of Achim's body language and facial expressions must be subject to the same laws of interpretation as are the expressions and poses of figures in a Rubens painting.

In contradistinction to Karsch's approach, however, Achim appears to discount the details of his personal life in awareness of his greater symbolic importance:

> Karsch dachte die Gegenstände und Ereignisse nach der Reihenfolge und gegenseitigen Wirkung zusammen, Achim verlängerte seine Meinung und bündelte sein Leben damit in eins, Karsch wollte nur wissen wie es gewesen war bei was für einem Wetter und in Anwesenheit welcher Zeugen, er hatte nicht Meinung, Achim war bereit das Wetter und die Zeugen und zarthäutig umgebene Mädchenaugen zu vertauschen dafür. (*DBA*, 180)

Whereas Karsch's method follows a kind of syntagmatic logic of "succession" (*Reihenfolge*) in keeping with the terrestrial laws of cause and effect, Achim's logic is a decidedly transcendent and paradigmatic one. The exchange or *Vertauschung* of weather, witnesses, and "soft-skinned girl eyes" for a political bottom line could be interpreted as being aligned with the substitution theory of metaphor, whereby the figurative word or image is simply decoded and reduced to its underlying meaning.[120] By contrast, Karsch's simultaneous appreciation of Achim's symbolic function and

[120] An earlier passage confirms Achim's tendency to replace specific details with lifeless credos: "Aber wenn Achim diese Einzelheiten lieber ersetzt haben möchte durch den in langsamem Tempo zum Mitschreiben formulierten Satz:

respect for his individual autonomy appears closer to I.A. Richard's theory of metaphor, as formulated in 1936: "In the simplest formulation, when we use a metaphor we have two thoughts of different things active together and supported by a single word, or phrase, whose meaning is the resultant of their interaction."[121] In Richard's understanding, a metaphor consists of a "tenor," which is to say the underlying purport of the image (in this case, the East German state), and a "vehicle," denoting the image itself (Achim). Rather than merely paring down the vehicle to the dimensions of the tenor in the manner of substitution theory, comparative metaphor, according to Richards, brings the two distinct objects and their respective contexts into contact while allowing neither to forfeit their singularity or suggesting the primacy of the one over the other. The metaphor, rather than being conceived as a kind of stylistic veil concealing actual content, constitutes the site of a transaction between two distinct objects and their surrounding connotations.

Considering the goals of Karsch's larger project, what does this particular approach to metaphor and figurative language have to do with Achim's biography? First of all, it should be clear that such an employment of the rhetorical trope, i.e. as a locus of interaction and comparison rather than substitution or projection, represents an extension of the narrator's thematic meditation on similarity and difference into the level of style. What appears to unite Johnson, the narrator, and Karsch is a theoretical and practical opposition to a method of *vergleichen* that proceeds according to the logic of identity, or what Adorno and Horkheimer dubbed "identity thinking" in

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Nach anfänglichem Zögern erkannte ich (also da müssen Sie schreiben: er) daß man sich nicht mit dem eigenen Leben zufrieden geben darf sondern sich beteiligen muß an der Gesellschaft, […] so mußte Karsch eben anerkennen daß Achims Erinnerung auf den Besitz der Anstecknadel schneller hinauslief als das vollständige Jahr, das er damals mit (anfänglichem) Zögern verbracht hatte." (*DBA*, 171)

[121] I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 93.

*Dialektik der Aufklärung*.[122] Achim's desire to merge all of the variegated details of his life into one unruffled narrative meant to provide his compatriots with an edifying ideal thereby naturally becomes an object of criticism. Nevertheless, this distrust of selective symbolism does not lead to a thoroughgoing rejection of figuration. It has been argued that Johnson, in attempting to construct a language removed from the dubious abstractions of partisan discourse, reverts to a semi-phenomenological mode of description, a Barthesian degree zero, focusing on corporeal immediacy in his depiction of bike races and interpersonal interactions and bypassing metaphor entirely.[123] Nevertheless, as the passage from the perspective of the museum guard already indicated, physical gestures and actions should by no means be perceived as a circumvention of symbolism; the movements and expressions of bodies are still subject to a decoding and symbolic reduction similar to Fleisg's description of a literary *Abhebung des Straßenbildes*. At numerous points in the novel, Karsch and others speculate over the meaning of particular facial expressions or body language, which feature a greater or lesser degree of legibility, as demonstrated during the interview with Achim's father: "Der Vater hat nicht viel gesagt. Sein Gesicht war unlesbar verschwiegen, er verständigte sich mit einzelnen wie hervorgepreßten Worten, nur der Mund war bewegt […]."[124] (*DBA*, 68) Interestingly, Karsch's decision to remain in the GDR and begin work

[122] "Die Versöhnung von Allgemeinem und Besonderem, von Regel und spezifischem Anspruch des Gegenstands, in deren Vollzug Stil allein Gehalt gewinnt, ist nichtig, weil es zur Spannung zwischen den Polen gar nicht mehr kommt: die Extreme, die sich berühren, sind in trübe Identität übergegangen, das Allgemeine kann das Besondere ersetzen und umgekehrt." Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1969), 116.

[123] See Alexandra Kleihues, *Medialität der Erinnerung*, 56; 80-86. Roland Barthes defines the concept of "degree zero" as follows: "In this same attempt towards disengaging literary language, here is another solution: to create a colourless writing, freed from all bondage to a pre-ordained state of language." Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. Annette Lavers & Colin Smith (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 76. For more on this reading of Johnson's style, specifically the influence of the *Nouveau roman*, see Uwe Neumann, *Uwe Johnson und der* Nouveau Roman*. Komparatistische Untersuchungen zur Stellung von Uwe Johnsons Erzählwerk zur Theorie und Praxis des* Nouveau Roman (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Peter Lang, 1992).

[124] The narrator (or Karsch) more explicitly states their doubts as to the face's expressibility while drafting a fictional scene (based on a factual account) in which Achim's father considers sabotaging the construction of Nazi aircraft:

on Achim's biography is engendered, at least superficially, by the intriguing countenance of a hotel bellhop:

> – Entschuldigen Sie bitte: antwortete der verwirrte Angestellte, und in der Betrachtung seines nun sehr ländlichen Gesichtes merkte Karsch einen plötzlichen heiteren Spaß, der machte ihn neugierig auf dies Land und wie darin zu leben wäre. Also blieb er noch. Für eine Weile: dachte er." (*DBA*, 37)

This is hardly the main reason for Karsch's prolonged stay. However, this passage does indicate the degree to which the Lukácsian belief in a bedrock of substance underlying the superficial cityscape exerts influence on Karsch as well: the sudden glimmer of joviality on the bellboy's face seems to bespeak a previously overlooked dimension of feeling in the citizens of the GDR. It is a realization grounded not in the evidence-based thinking of the journalist, but rather in the cautious lyricism of the modernist writer.

To the extent that one can refer to Karsch's method of investigation as hermeneutical, relying as it does on the observation and interpretation of surface phenomena, it is worth noting that this hermeneutics rests upon a kind of tropic thinking. Achim's biography is not merely the story of a person caught up in the founding of a state; even for Karsch, the narrative of Achim's life is intended to provide an analogical mode for understanding the German Democratic Republic and its inception. Ultimately, Achim's failure to acknowledge his complicity in National Socialist violence reproduces one of the primary failures of the GDR, as Johnson saw it: the inability to construct a postwar German state founded upon an honest and unflinching acknowledgement of and intensive preoccupation with the Holocaust and crimes of the Nazi era.[125] And although

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"Der jähe Schreck der Einsamkeit inmitten leise knirschender Zeichenmaschinen und unkenntlich gebeugter Rücken und unablässig bewegter Arme. Was ist ein Gesicht, dient es dem verläßlichen Ausdruck." (*DBA*, 126)

[125] "Im ›Dritten Buch‹ kam [Johnson] zu der Einsicht, daß weder die DDR noch die BRD ein ehrliches Interesse an der Schuld der Deutschen zeigte, da beide Staaten eher damit beschäftigt waren, sich gegen den deutschen Nachbarn zu behaupten." Greg Bond, "»Die Toten halten zuverlässig das Maul«: Uwe Johnson im wiedervereinigten Deutschland," in *Internationales Uwe-Johnson-Forum. Beiträge zum Werkverständnis und Materialien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte*, vol. 3, ed. Carsten Gansel, Bernd Neumann, & Nicolai Riedel (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1988), 185.

arguably any attempt to thoroughly comprehend the life of an individual from an outside vantage will be subject to some degree of inexactitude and distortion, the cultural distance between the two German states, anchored as they are in two distinct discourses, virtually guarantees the employment of incommensurate metaphors and images. Indeed, just as Karsch must struggle to cross this discursive border in the direction of Achim and his compatriots, so must he and the narrator submit to either clichéd or inexact language and imagery in conveying their experiences to the West German reader. As already suggested above, this is precisely what occurs in the novel's opening paragraph, in which the narrator attempts to stimulate the reader's imagination by means of evocative, though overused, images. The employment of figurative language constitutes yet another symptom of Karsch's endeavor to establish a connection between the two states, one that will enable him to compare them in his analysis of East German mentalities and lifestyles and then communicate these foreign entities to West German recipients. The border-crossing function of figuration is itself embodied in the German word *übertragen*, which, like the Greek μεταφορά, contains the meanings 'metaphorical,' 'figurative,' 'carried over,' 'transferred.' In a sense then, the metaphoricity that Johnson sees as part of a pernicious *Vergleichssucht* among authors and political functionaries becomes an element of Karsch's own increasingly disheartening *Vergleichssuche*. As the narrator appears to suggest near the novel's end, perhaps the only remaining commonality between the two German states, which have effectively disowned their shared past, is the border itself, the most palpable, indisputable *tertium comparationis*: "Was ließ [Achim] zwei Staaten vergleichen: die Grenze zwischen ihnen?" (*DBA*, 287) Nevertheless, as the work's final sentence asserts, this border appears to offer little more than a visualization of the distance and difference between the two countries.

This struggle to establish a logical or figural connection between the two states, however, is not undermined in all cases. A very illuminating instance of tropic language arises early on in the novel, one that unveils yet another function of metaphor in Johnson's work. When describing the ostensibly unimaginable clamor of the crowd at Achim's birthday celebration, Karsch resorts to a synesthetic description seemingly undergirded by loose similarities between the oscillating roar of a crowd, the opening of an orchestral piece, a thundering stampede, a war scene, and the rolling and crashing of waves, to name only a handful of the various images gathered in this extended and seemingly chaotic metaphor:

> Der Aufschrei war unvorstellbar. Unmenschlich fiel aus der Dachwölbung die vergrößerte Summe aller Laute des Erstaunens und des freudigen Aufatmens in den Hohlraum zurück. Der nächste Einsatz war allen gemeinsam, weit hinten in der Kehle bildeten sie die erste Silbe von Achims Namen, erschöpft nach dem Anstieg sank die zweite ab, in beschleunigtem Rhythmus verfolgten sie einander, zweite Silbe überlagerte erste, erste in zweiter umschlossen, Beine schwangen über die hohen schwarzen Buchstaben, Armschwenken sprengte die Sitzreihen hoch, der Stimmenlärm kam als Getrampel zurück. […] Vom Ufer der überhohen Spitzkurve setzte ein vielstimmiges Wort in selbstvergessenem Sprung auf die Ränge, überschlug sich vervielfacht, das Wort zerriß zu krachenden Rhythmen, man kann es am besten graphisch notieren. (*DBA*, 14-15)

Arising out of an admission of ineffability ("Der Aufschrei war unvorstellbar"), the description of the crowd's exclamation—or more specifically its movement—opens with an adverb ("Unmenschlich") ostensibly ill fitted for the echo of "die vergrößerte Summe aller Laute des Erstaunens," a phrase that itself mingles an abstract quantitative and a tangible sonic register.[126] This mixed metaphor becomes even more convoluted with the onset of the second collective cry depicted as an "Einsatz," which could be read as referring to either a musical or a military term; to be sure, both are supported by subsequent elements of the trope ("in beschleunigtem Rhythmus"; "Armschwenken sprengte die Sitzreihen hoch"). The trope continues to interweave various

[126] Holger Helbig has noted that the surprising description of the "inhumanely" falling exclamation of the crowd could be interpreted as a reference to Lukács' aforementioned essay, where the descriptive mode is dubbed *unmenschlich*. Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 110.

thematic associations, with the predominant field of reference arguably being that of violent warfare, quite understandably for a postwar depiction of a noisy throng. In the final sentence quoted above, however, the labeling of the track's edge as a "shore" (*Ufer*) onto which the "many-voiced"—or, to extend the musical analogy, "polyphonic"—word "tumbles" (*sich überschlagen*) blends the overriding military metaphor with water imagery.[127]

As previously demonstrated by Karsch's satirical likening of the 1929 global economic collapse to an international deluge, a large number of the metaphors in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* are in some way or another linked to water: "Das grobe Pflaster senkte sich in schrägen Wellen zum Rathaus abwärts" (*DBA*, 58); "die einzelnen Bauteile der besseren Zukunft auftauchend in umgischtetem Kantenriß aus dem scheinbar unveränderten Strudel des täglichen Tags" (*DBA*, 115); "Wenn Spitzengruppe und Hauptfeld in der Nordkurve entschwinden […], senken sich die Wogenkämme des anfeuernden Geschreis, das ist ein Vergleich" (*DBA*, 147). This water imagery recurs frequently throughout the narrative and ultimately culminates in Karsch's description of the opening of a hypothetical film capable of condensing the entirety of Achim's life story, as well as his historical and symbolic significance, into a cleverly edited series of shots:

> Im Bild erscheint unwiderlegbar der dreißigjährige Held vor dem tosenden schrägen Zuschauerwall, leergefahren möchte er sein wehrlos scharfes Atmen lächeln machen, immer wieder treten die grauen Kanten der Atemnot unter der weicheren Mimik hervor, auf dem dazu synchronen Tonband schaukeln die Berge und Täler des brüllenden Tonfalls um in die schwer flappenden Überschläge von Meeresbrandung (*um den Vergleich doch endlich zu rechtfertigen*), […]. Unzweifelbar marschieren von links nach rechts und von oben nach unten und aus dem Hintergrund ineinander gewaltsam singende Marschkolonnen in brauner Uniform, dicht absperrend stehen rote Fahnen mit großem Hakenkreuz beisammen im Wind und neigen vor Böllerschüssen […]. (*DBA*, 247, my emphasis)

[127] The second sentence of *Jahrestage*, in which the narrator describes the double-image of the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of New Jersey and the Baltic Sea off the coast of Mecklenburg, employs similar language and evokes similar connotations: "Der straffe Überschlag, schon weißlich gestriemt, umwikkelt einen runden Hohlraum Luft, der von der klaren Masse zerdrückt wird, als sei da ein Geheimnis gemacht und zerstört worden." Uwe Johnson, *Jahrestage*, vol. 1, 7. For more on the military undertones of this image, along with the connection in Johnson's writing between pain and memory, see Oliver Simons, "Johnson's Memory Experiment," *The Germanic Review* 93, no. 2 (2018), 155-169.

Here the relatively amorphous images alluded to in the account of Achim's thirtieth birthday harden into concrete objects. The roar of the crowd celebrating the cyclist's victory cleanly transitions into the crashing of waves, which is followed shortly thereafter by the "undeniable" march of Nazi soldiers in an image that evokes iconic shots from Leni Riefenstahl's notorious propaganda film *Triumph des Willens*. The film description continues in this breathless fashion for the next four pages, rifling through a kaleidoscope of documentary-style shots compiled in a manner more akin to the montage-oriented works of Dziga Vertov and Walter Ruttmann than to Johnson's cinematic contemporaries.

Though the passage cited above combines the same central images as does the depiction of Achim's birthday, what sets it apart is that each image is cordoned off, as it were, into an isolated shot or sequence. The dynamism and indeterminacy of the birthday description, which shifts registers without warning and combines multiple points of reference in a single word, cannot be replicated by the rapid yet discontinuous succession of discrete shots. More importantly for Johnson's narrative, what film foregoes is the unavoidable struggle to convey unfamiliar objects and experiences to a distant recipient, a labor that is in fact doubled by the indiscrete nature of literature's signs, as the narrator confesses to the reader during a superficial sketch of Karin's features: "Ich halte es für sinnlos dir ihr Gesicht zu beschreiben, es ist das Leichteste am Menschen zu vergessen; *die Worte vergleichen und sind offen nach überallhin*." (*DBA*, 33, my emphasis) Even a film like this one that is seemingly aligned with the avant-garde tenets of Soviet montage theory, in which the juxtaposition of two seemingly unrelated shots brings them into meaning-producing interaction, cannot attain the figurative nebulousness of lyrical description.[128] The

[128] For more on Sergei Eisenstein's writings on montage and their relation to theories of metaphor, see Trevor Whitcock, *Metaphor and Film* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 70-78.

solidity of its images renders filmic representation "irrefutable," as the narrator indicates. The indubitable status of its signs therefore makes film an inadequate medium for the depiction of Karsch's seemingly futile task. The West German journalist acknowledges the incommensurability between the two states' discourses and ideologies, a disparity that necessarily undermines the ostensibly self-evident symbolism of cinematic images. And yet, somehow, he must attempt to provide his West German readers with an authentic account of the GDR, although "alles in diesem Land will für sich angesehen werden und zeigt sich nicht im Vergleich […]." (*DBA*, 119)

Nevertheless, despite this apparent eschewal of *Vergleiche*, Karsch summons a host of figural devices in his recounting of Achim's birthday celebration, which also constitutes his first encounter with the East German cycling legend. Both Holger Helbig and Ulrich Fries have indicated the centrality of this episode to the novel's larger aesthetic concerns, arguing that it can be read as a direct response to Lukács' essay *Erzählen oder Beschreiben*, which opens with an evaluative comparison between Zola's descriptive rendition of a horse race in *Nana* and Tolstoy's narrative depiction of one in *Anna Karenina.*[129] Indeed, Karsch's portrayal of the event is discussed at numerous points in the novel; he submits it to Fleisg for publication in the local paper only to have it rejected by the young party stalwart for its apparent dismantling of a human audience into an agitated swarm of abstract traits: "Züge gibt es da, wissen Sie! es sieht so aus? als ob die begeisterten Menschen ja hysterisch wären, müßte da der Schreiber nicht mehr Anteil nehmen...?" (*DBA*, 54) As Fleisg's rebuke suggests, not only does the passage represent a rebuttal to Lukács' essay in its privileging of pure description over narration, it also serves as a model of figurative language opposed to the straightforward symbolism of socialist realism, oriented as it is toward

[129] Holger Helbig, *Beschreibung einer Beschreibung*, 109-113; Ulrich Fries, "Überlegungen zu Johnsons zweitem Buch," 213.

"die ganze Person," which is to say the instrumentalized allegorical proxy devoid of individuality.[130] In its metonymic dismemberment of human bodies into arms and legs and its synesthetic intermingling of the senses the description of the birthday celebration appears in line with the Expressionist tradition, declared anathema by Lukács and the early cultural policy of the GDR. However, rather than merely dwelling within the bounds of a pre-established tradition, the passage appears to play out along the edge of semantic meaning, foregrounding the code to the detriment of the message in a manner commensurate with the description's content: the rending of Achim's first name into two a-signifying segments of sound and these syllables' nonsensical overlay.

The portrayal of the mass commotion at Achim's birthday celebration offers an instance of metaphor conceived beyond the constraining concepts of comparison or resemblance. As opposed to Eisenstein's intellectual montage, which takes two seemingly unrelated images and binds them together dialectically, Johnson's highly abstract illustration of the crowd demonstrates the distinct capacity of figurative language to linger in the interstices between various groups of images, to forestall synthesis to the benefit of polysemy, like the *vielstimmiges Wort* that Karsch perceives bounding into the stands. Though Johnson could not have been familiar with this work, as it appeared fourteen years after *Das dritte Buch*'s publication, it may be helpful to consider Paul Ricœur's *La métaphore vivre*, which draws upon Monroe Beardsley's understanding of metaphor as an instance of "logical absurdity" in order to formulate a productive notion of figurative language. Indeed, Ricœur's specific choice of words hints at how metaphor might offer Johnson a

[130] "[M]it der Beschreibung sämtlicher Radrennen nach dem Krieg und mit Anekdoten aus Achims Kindheit und dem Rennfahrerleben […] sei nicht die ganze Person gegeben. Die ganze Person aber sei der Einmarsch der sowjetischen Armee und der Aufbau der neuen Wirtschaft und die neue Zufriedenheit des Lebens und die fahnenschwenkenden Zuschauer am Rande der Rennstrecken alles in allem!" (*DBA*, 54)

way out of the Cold War clash of semiotic systems. Analyzing Beardsley's *The Metaphorical Twist* (1962), Ricœur writes:

> What is new is the emphasis placed on the notion of "logically empty attribution" and—among all possible forms of such attribution—incompatibility, i.e. self-contradictory attribution, attribution that destroys itself. […] Incompatibility is a conflict between designations at the primary level of meaning, which obliges the reader to extract from the entire range of connotations the secondary meanings capable of rendering a self-destructive statement into "meaningful self-contradictory attribution." […] The point that must be emphasized for the following discussion concerns what I will call the manufacture of meaning [*le travail du sens*]: it is, in effect, the reader who *elaborates (works out)* the connotations of the modifier capable of producing meaning. In this respect, a significant trait of living language is the power to move farther and farther back the border [*frontière*] of nonsense. There are perhaps no words so incompatible that no poet could bridge the gap between them. The power to create new contextual meanings appears very well to be unlimited. Attributions that seem "foolish" (*nonsensical*) can become meaningful within an unexpected context.[131]

What Ricœur offers here is the possibility of moving beyond a discussion of comparison and incompatibility into the realm of seemingly unlimited artistic productivity. Metaphor is not an artificial construct of literary style meant merely to adorn or disguise otherwise transparent symbols or statements; rather, it represents a vital component of "living language" (*langage vivant*) charged with pushing back the boundaries of conventional meaning. In this regard, it is fundamentally related to the figure of catachresis, which is to say the employment of an established sign to refer to an object or event with no designation of its own in the language in question. Ricœur, quoting from Pierre Fontanier's canonical *Les Figures du discours*, draws out this connection: "The condition for catachresis can be found in the origin of tropes themselves, namely 'the failure of proper terms and the need, the necessity to compensate for this insufficiency and paucity.'"[132] Bringing this conception of metaphor to bear on *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, one perceives how it applies to Johnson's attempt to forge a new, specifically literary language capable

[131] Paul Ricœur, *La métaphore vive* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975), 123.

[132] Ibid., 85.

of bridging the gap between the disparate East and West German discourses. In this sense, the bridge or *tertium comparationis* between the two ideological and discursive regimes becomes the venue of uninhibited artistic creation.

**VII. Conclusion: The Border as Aesthetic Opportunity**

With regard to its perspectival play and self-reflexive employment of figurative language as outlined in the two previous sections, *Das dritte Buch über Achim* demonstrates by means of its formal qualities both claims that Johnson makes for literature in his poetological essay "Berliner Stadtbahn": on the one hand, it can quite successfully serve as a witting or unwitting tool of the two German states' Cold War propaganda, 'keratinizing' (*verhornen*) or hardening the cultural and ideological borders between East and West Germany; on the other hand, it can operate as a means of drawing the reader's attention to the manner in which such boundaries are constructed in thought, to the devices and aesthetic sleights of hand that undergird the concrete borders between the two states. Though the novel performs the overcoming of the diegetic partition between the West German journalist Karsch and his East German subject Achim, for instance, in a subsequent step, the narrator analytically divides this constructed continuum into its individual elements and indicates the gaps between them. One perceives here the deconstruction of a supposedly straightforward narrative similar to the segmentation of the train journey in "Berliner Stadtbahn." Additionally, the narrator's explicit signaling of his own use of metaphorical language, in imitation of the manipulative figuration characteristic of official and artistic discourses in the GDR, stages the critical reproduction of partisan language described in the same essay, with the Brechtian phrases *sozusagen* or *zum Beispiel* from the latter text replaced by the motif *Dies ist ein Vergleich*. Nevertheless, as suggested by the final analysis of the previous section, *Das dritte Buch* illustrates

a feature of Johnson's border poetics not explicitly described in "Berliner Stadtbahn," and which appears in the works of the subsequent two authors as well. Rather than merely treating the ideological and discursive division between the two German states as an obstacle to communication and the rupture of a cohesion that existed within the German nation previous, the "border," as the narrator dubs this gap or "difference" at the beginning and end of Johnson's novel, is paradoxically aesthetically productive. Johnson's forfeiture of a cohesive epic form in the opening of "Berliner Stadtbahn" is not presented nostalgically as the irretrievable loss of a superior genre, the remains of which can only be intimated by a lesser, fragmentary mode of writing. On the contrary, as exhibited by the narrator of *Das dritte Buch*'s endeavors to productively combine the artistic and official discourses of the FRG and the GDR, not in the hopes of generating a new, stable synthesis but rather in an attempt to destabilize the discursive boundaries of both, the labor to overcome this rift simultaneously widens the traditional parameters of the novel form. In this regard, the border as presented in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* can be perceived as a space of aesthetic experimentation hinting at new literary means of expression.

## CHAPTER TWO

### The Border as the Site of Satirical Critique

### Arno Schmidt's *Das steinerne Herz*

## I. Marking Territory

Near the end of the second section of *Das steinerne Herz*, Arno Schmidt's novel published in 1956, the first-person narrator Walter Eggers finds himself straddling the demarcation line between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany:

> *Rede auf der Zonengrenze :* Ich, breitbeinig zwischen Ost und West; verregnete Hände eingetascht; auf dem Kopf die schwarze Tuchschüssel; der Wind blies die unrasierten Kiefern auf. Manchmal schob mich ein PKW beiseite : das Sekundenpendel des Scheibenwischers radierte immer über ein blasses Weibsgesicht. (*SH*, 105)

The passage is followed by a critique leveled against both newly formed German states. But the content of the short paragraph cited above, one of the several hundred fragmentary *Erlebniseinheiten* or reverse-indented passages that string together the text,[133] may initially appear unclear, owing in part to the author's characteristic employment of absurd imagery, seemingly ill-suited technical terminology, and illogical compound words. But context brings the image into focus: the collector Eggers and his traveling companion Karl Thumann, a truck driver who transports milk from Hanover to West Berlin, are passing through the checkpoint Helmstedt-Marienborn on their return trip from East to West Germany. Eggers momentarily disembarks in search of a lavatory, only to find all of them occupied: "*Bloß 3 Türen und Alles besetzt !*" (*SH*, 104) Following Thumann's suggestion ("»Iss doch noch dunkel : geh ruhich an' Rand !«"), Eggers

[133] Schmidt provides the following definition of his idiosyncratic *Erlebniseinheiten* in his poetological essay "Berechnungen I": "Auf dem Bindfaden der Bedeutungslosigkeit, der allgegenwärtigen langen Weile, ist die Perlenkette kleiner Erlebniseinheiten, innerer und äußerer, aufgereiht. Von Mitternacht zu Mitternacht ist gar nicht »1 Tag«, sondern »1440 Minuten« (und von diesen wiederum sind höchstens 50 belangvoll !)." (B, 167)

makes his way into the nearby woods to relieve himself in the no-man's land between the GDR and the FRG. (*SH*, 104) Not only is Schmidt's protagonist standing astride the demarcation line between the Eastern and Western worlds during his "*Rede auf der Zonengrenze*"; he is 'marking his territory.' This image of Eggers urinating onto the border not only displays the cavalier disposition of the traditional Schmidtian protagonist. It also exemplifies the polysemic and often contradictory quality of the author's prose, which contains images capable of being interpreted in many different ways. Treating this description as the novel's central image, this chapter will attempt to answer the following questions: What is the symbolic significance of Egger's activity and how should it be understood within the context of Schmidt's novel, as well as against the backdrop of the Cold War diplomatic division of the globe? Does it symbolize the self-determination of the individual over against the external forces of world politics and history? Is it a politically encoded act of civil disobedience or merely a vulgar, masculine display of the narrator's bloated sense of self-importance?

One possible interpretation is that the protagonist signals here his liminal position between the two German states, both of which he censures to varying degree and neither of which he wishes to adopt as his home: "*Ich denke nicht daran,* Euren Beifall zu briguieren, ob Ost oder West ! : ‹Nicht Ich, Ihr Athener, bin da, von Euch zu lernen : sondern Ihr seid da, von mir zu lernen !›." (*SH*, 106)[134] During his brief trip to East Berlin, which he undertakes in order to steal an obscure reference work from the Berlin State Library, he takes stock of East German life, politics, and culture in comparison to the dreaded "Bundesdiktatur" of the Federal Republic. (*SH*, 105) But Eggers comes down in favor of neither, though he does ultimately return to West Germany to

[134] This citation is drawn from Friedrich Klopstocks *Die deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik*, which Schmidt adapts in his subsequent work *Die Gelehrtenrepublik*, a novel that similarly revolves around the conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs. Josef Huerkamp, *»Die große Kartei«. Enzyklopädie zu Arno Schmidts Roman »Das steinerne Herz«* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2011), 622-3.

ensure that his act of theft goes unpunished. And the comparisons themselves indicate how each side of the global conflict can only be appraised from the vantage of the opposing one. The straddle-legged stance over the inner German border might therefore be read as demonstrating the capture of the protagonist within a binary structure that allows him to perceive neither half on its own terms: "was mich neugierig in die DDR führt, ist weniger die anziehende Kraft des Ostens – die ich ja kaum noch kenne ! – als vielmehr die abstoßende des Westens !)." (*SH*, 79) A third interpretation might reject the liminal space ("zwischen") and the binary structure ("ob") in favor of the topos of the margin, as Eggers is indeed peeing *am Rand*. The selection of one spatial paradigm over another lends different contours to the interpretation of this pivotal act, and thus to the interpretation of the novel as a whole. Though Egger's trip to East Berlin constitutes only one third of this novel, the entire text presents itself as a denunciation of the political circumstances that existed throughout Europe in the mid-1950s, with Konrad Adenauer's integration of the FRG into the Western Bloc and rearmament over against the perceived threat of the Eastern Bloc serving as central points of critique.[135] Properly identifying the space in which Eggers holds his *Rede auf der Zonengrenze* arguably allows the reader to pinpoint the site from which the novel's more general critique is launched.

Moreover, the crude 'demarcation' carried out by the protagonist demands to be taken seriously in a work that forefronts not only the *Demarkationslinie* between East and West Germany, but also the Oder-Neisse border between the GDR and the Polish People's Republic. A central passage of the novel focuses on the ethnic cleansing of Germans from the 'recovered

[135] This appears to have been Schmidt's intent as well. The author attempted to rush the book's publication in order to guarantee its political sting: "Je eher er erschiene, desto besser wäre es; denn ich möchte auf jeden Fall vermeiden, daß er sich bereits ‹historisch› liest : er soll Pfeffer in noch offene Wunden sein, eine Peitsche auf den noch nackten Hintern !" Cited in Josef Huerkamp, *Die Große Kartei*, 20. Unfortunately, the reestablishment of the Bundeswehr in late 1955 led Schmidt to believe he had missed his opportunity, which partially explains the novel's subtitle: *Historischer Roman aus dem Jahre 1954 nach Christi*.

territory' of Silesia, which was ceded to Poland by the Allies as a result of the Potsdam Agreement in 1945.[136] As recounted by the expellee Line, this embittered portrayal of the swift 're-Polonization' of the formerly German town of Lauban (Polish Lubań) thematizes the painful human consequences of the redrawing of borders. Line experiences firsthand the transience of possession, both territorial and personal, and perceives the sudden transformation of her hometown into a kind of no man's land subjected to the appropriation of presumably unscrupulous Poles:

> ‹*Matonis*› : »*Faul* waren die Polen : zum Erbrechen !« – [Der Pole Matonis] ‹nahm› sich dann Lachmanns Geschäft in der Jelengorskaja (wie jetzt die Hirschbergerstraße hieß) »eines Tages standen sie (Lachmanns) vor unserer Tür : er ne Kaffeetasse in der Hand, sie ein Kopfkissen unterm Arm. Völlig benommen : ‹Ihr› Pole hat uns hergeschickt; er hat unser Haus ‹genommen›«." (*SH*, 85)

This play on the root *Nahme*, through which the Polish *Landnahme* is seen to result in the *Benommenheit* of the German expellees, is certainly no direct allusion to Carl Schmitt's theory of *Nomos*, which presents the act of land appropriation (generally carried out in *terra nullius*) as the founding step in the progression from nomadic "barbarism" to an organized society undergirded by a legal framework.[137] Nevertheless, both Schmidt and Schmitt have a common intellectual ancestor in Gustav Freytag, whose anti-Semitic and anti-Slavic *Soll und Haben* follows the German settler Anton Wohlfahrt in his endeavors to protect his family's Silesian estate from Polish uprisings.[138] *Soll und Haben*, along with Freytag's *Die verlorene Handschrift*, remain implicit

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[136] The "recovered territories" (*ziemie odzyskane*) was the Polish People's Republic's official nomenclature for eastern Brandenburg, Lower Silesia, East Prussia, Pomerania, and the western part of Upper Silesia. All of these territories had belonged to Germany or Prussia for centuries, but Polish borderland scholars sought to reclaim them for Poland as they had been part of the first Polish dynasty, the House of Piast, during the Middle Ages. See Peter Polak-Springer, *Recovered Territory. A German-Polish Conflict over Land and Culture, 1919-1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 183-185. Polak-Springer compares the work of these Polish borderland scholars to interwar German researchers of *Ostforschung* making similar recourse to medieval history in their justification of Germany's eastward expansion.

[137] See Carl Schmitt, "Nomos – Nahme – Name," in *Staat, Großraum, Nomos. Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916-1969*, ed. Günter Maschke (Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt, 1995), 573-591.

[138] For an analysis of Freytag's overwhelming significance to the development of German geopolitical discourses and mental maps, see Kristin Kopp, "Constructing German Colonial Space in the East: Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* as Colonial Novel," in *Germany's Wild East*, 29-56.

references throughout Schmidt's novel, and the "Niemandsland" onto which Eggers pees bears striking similarities to the barren Polish soil of Freytag's famous work: "*Fuchsige Erde*, plattes Gelb, gestricheltes Grün. Gras, the old tore, konnte man mit dem Schuh zerwühlen." (*SH*, 104)[139]

What is meant then by Egger's small-scale reenactment of the demarcation executed by various state and non-state actors in the novel? Is it a critical act intended to satirize and highlight the instability of national borderlines, seeing as the single region of Silesia had at various moments in its history belonged to the Austrian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia, the German Reich, and the Polish People's Republic? Or is it rather a symbolic manifestation of Egger's own attempts to guide and profit from the continual redistribution and exchange of possessions aided by the transfer of territory? At this point in the narrative the protagonist is about to sneak a pilfered *Statistisches Handbuch* across the inner German border on his return trip to the Lower Saxon town of Ahlden. There he is eagerly awaited by Thumann's wife Frieda, whom he seduces in the first part of the novel in order to get his hands on the *Nachlass* of her great-grandfather C.W.C.F. Jansen, a producer of statistical yearbooks from the early nineteenth century. Needless to say, Eggers, unlike Line, is hardly a victim of the steady shuffling of possessions that characterizes all three sections of the novel.

In the scene described above, Schmidt's protagonist Walter Eggers pees onto what Uwe Johnson referred to as "die Grenze zwischen den beiden Ordnungen, nach denen heute in der Welt gelebt werden kann." (BS, 10) This passage will be used as a jumping-off point in order to explore the unique character of Cold War borders as they materialize in Schmidt's novel, in contradistinction to the appearance of borders in Johnson's early works and Zbigniew Herbert's

[139] "[D]ie Pferde wateten bald durch ausgefahrene Wasserpfützen, bald durch tiefen Sand. Gelber Sand glänzte zwischen dem dürftigen Grün der Äcker überall, wo eine Feldmaus den Eingang zu ihrer Grube angelegt […] hatte […]." Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1858), 493.

travelogues. Following this brief introduction to the novel via the urination scene, the chapter will then zoom out in order to examine the literary topographies of Schmidt's early work. In gaining an understanding of the spaces that populate the author's previous writings, such as the omnipresent heath, one achieves a more fine-grained appreciation of what happens to the extra-textual space of the inner German border when it is drawn into the Schmidtian universe of *Das steinerne Herz*. Analyzing key passages from the early stories *Enthymesis* and *Schwarze Spiegel* will help clarify the notion of the *Heidedichter* and delineate the precise manner in which his figures transcend material and conceptual borders that another kind of writer might endeavor to uphold. As it happens, geography is a recurrent motif in Schmidt's early writings, almost always in tandem with the discipline of cartography, which, in its effort to project the three-dimensional surface of the earth onto a two-dimensional sheet of paper, provides Schmidt with a near-scientific model for the reproductive labor of literature. And since Schmidt's borders are more abstract and inorganic than the *Naturgrenzen* of early geopolitical discourse, as state actors exploit natural boundaries (like the Oder river) in order to justify and naturalize the politically motivated redrawing of national borders, insight into Schmidt's literary treatment of map-making will be essential in approaching the explicitly constructed character of his *Linealgrenzen*. As I hope to demonstrate, Schmidt appears to draw attention to precisely the kind of abstract, diplomatically negotiated borders that the political geographer Friedrich Ratzel, creator of the concept of *Lebensraum*, characterized in his writings as unreal things.[140]

Following the examination of space and cartography in the author's previous writings, the analysis will then return to *Das steinerne Herz* to perform close readings on three scenes pivotal

[140] "Die Neigung zur Vereinfachung der Vorstellung von den Grenzen führt in den allerverschiedensten Fällen auf die gleiche, weil nächstliegende Auskunft: die *Linie*, mit welcher […] die Geographie in ihrer ganzen Ausdehnung zu tun hat. Ob der Gelehrte sie durch Messung oder die Diplomatie durch einen Vertrag festsetzt, diese Linien sind stets unwirkliche Dinge." Friedrich Ratzel, *Erdenmacht und Völkerschicksal* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1941), 35.

to any interpretation of the novel's handling of movement and space: Egger's initial arrival in Ahlden, the easterly crossing of the inner German border, and Line's recounting of the ethnic cleansing of Lauban. As the analysis of these passages will reveal, the spatial paradigms of Schmidt's texts are manifold and the various borders and boundaries that appear throughout the novel can hardly be reduced to a single category. Whereas the transitional space between Ahlden and the surrounding heath might best be categorized as a permeable threshold between two realms with distinct styles of imagery, the border crossing at Helmstedt-Marienborn, at least during the trip from West to East Germany, presents itself as a hermetic boundary outfitted with a meticulous security apparatus that must be outmaneuvered by the protagonist. In keeping with the Schmidtian protagonist's characteristic distrust of systems and religious or ideological dogmas, *Das steinerne Herz* cannot be said to put forward a singular regime of spatial imagery. With regard to the concept of the border, the novel contains thresholds, zones, and demarcations lines as well, all of which have varying effects on mobility and create various degrees of separation. In fact, it is precisely this conceptual fluidity that functions as the common denomination for the many borders that appear in the novel: none of them can be described as permanent or fixed. And the striking motility of the protagonist, who moves effortlessly between different domains, arguably corresponds to the novel's central operation of critique, which in its use of inversion and carnivalesque satire consistently chips away at the fault lines between the two German states.

## II. The Unbounded Heath

Wandering through the settlement in Adlershof where Line resides, Eggers describes what he perceives as the oppressive cultivation of trees by the residents:

> *Durch die Kolonie :* überall, ausgespannt an Wänden, die gräßlichverzerrten Gestalten gekreuzigter Bäume : wie wundervoll gebaut sind Kiefernjungfrauen, wenn sie ganz frei

> stehen ! (nicht die künstlich hochgetriebenen Zittergrasfiguren unserer Schnellwuchsforstungen : es lebe die Lüneburger Heide ! – Das heißt : jetzt auch nicht mehr, wo die Engländer sie derartig ruinierten ! Na, bald kommen unsere ‹Truppenübungsplätze› noch dazu ! – Pflanzenbatik und Kolonen.)" (*SH*, 73)

Though this passage contains the novel's sole mention of the Lüneburg Heath, it does indicate the symbolic import of this space in Schmidt's oeuvre: The description of the "pine-virgins" and their unobstructed stature represent a counterpart to the typical Schmidtian protagonist unhampered by ideological dogmas and constraints. But the heath's apparent opposition to regimentation becomes even more pronounced in light of the militarization of West Germany and the aggravation of Cold War hostilities that stand at the center of *Das steinerne Herz*. The juxtaposition between strict military discipline—or orderliness more generally—and the unruly heath can be found throughout Schmidt's early works. For instance, on the first page of his novella *Schwarze Spiegel*, which takes place in the deserted and radioactive Lüneburg Heath following a nuclear holocaust, the unnamed first-person narrator comes across an initially mysterious landmark:

> Daneben am verwobenen Rain eine Spitzsäule. Ich rätselte ein bißchen an der eingegrabenen Legende : ach so : ein T.P. ! Und ich lachte schwächlich : mir hat mal ein Schupooffizier erzählt, und treuherzig dazu, daß die Polizei alle halben Jahre auch sämtliche trigonometrischen Punkte kontrollieren müßte, ob sie noch vorhanden seien. Und da der eine viertels in einem Fußweg stand, hätte er, zusammen mit den interessierten Bauern, das Ding anderthalb Meter nach rechts in's Wald gesetzt, wo er Niemanden mehr störte, und dann jahrelang still weiter das ‹Vorhandensein› gemeldet ! Seit der Zeit mißtraue ich den säkularen Ergebnissen der Geodäten, betreffend die weitere Auffaltung des Alpenmassivs, oder die Hebung Norddeutschlands : cherchez les constables ! – Ja aber nach rechts oder links? (*SS*, 201-2)

Approaching the heath, the narrator encounters an untilled strip of land upon which stands a triangulation pillar employed for the distribution and measurement of space.[141] The composition of this *Rain* is not a single line in the manner of a *Grenzlinie*, but rather a tangle of threads that

[141] In Schmidt's later published *Stürenberg-Geschichten*, written between 1955 and 1956, it is the military who is in charge of monitoring the position of these trigonometric points. Arno Schmidt, "Verschobene Kontinente," in *Kleinere Erzählungen*, vol. 4 of *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, 63-65.

would trouble the simplistic distinction between inside and outside promoted by traditional conceptions of borderlines. It is significant that this short story, in which the protagonist makes a home for himself in the lawless Lüneberg Heath, begins both with the appearance of a permeable boundary that gives the wanderer little sense of direction or orientation and with the disruption of secondary methods of demarcating this otherwise open space. What's more, the policeman's testimony about the conveniently displaced trigonometric points demonstrates not only the mimetic inaccuracy of cartographic representations of place, but also the futility of converting such a space into a territorial possession subject to the control or supervision of an overseeing authority.

One notes a deterioration of simple geometric forms in the passage from *Schwarze Spiegel* cited above, the trigonometric points failing to submit the landscape to a rigid geometrical order. In fact, the principles of geometry not only underlie the land-surveying methods and practices ubiquitous in Schmidt's early works; they can also be found at the core of some of his poetological writings. His essay "Berechnungen I," written around the same time as *Das steinerne Herz*, opens with the epigraph "Nemo geometriae ignarus intrato" ("Let no one ignorant of geometry enter"). (B, 163) In this text, the author provides a catalog of lines and planar curves (e.g. hypocycloid, lemniscate) in order to visualize and provide a degree of regularity to otherwise nebulous prose forms:

> Jeder Art der Bewegung im Raum (gesetzmäßig festgelegt und geregelt durch die Urexplosion des Leviathans) entspricht sogleich ein sehr scharf umrissener Themenkreis. – Ich bediene mich zur Bezeichnung dieser Bewegungskurven der präzisen Namen, welche die Mathematik (zur Hälfte ja eben eine Wissenschaft des Raumes !) längst festgesetzt hat […]." (B, 165)

Since Schmidt cannot demonstrate the presumably uniforms laws generated by the "ur-explosion of the Leviathan" with any amount of scientific exactitude, the "movement curves" and their time-honored mathematical designations are meant to impart to his thematic taxonomy the orderliness

of a fixed system. But the Lüneburg Heath, in which the dystopian Robinsonade *Schwarze Spiegel* opens, defies systematicity and disrupts margins of separation: "der lakonische Mond längs der zerbröckelten Straße (von den Rändern her haben Gras und Quecken die Teerdecke aufgebrochen, so daß nur in der Mitte noch zwei Meter Fahrbahn bleiben : das genügt ja für mich!)." (*SS*, 201) For Schmidt, the heath is the space where hard boundaries dissolve.

Still, it does not take long for the narrator's celebration of this open, uncultivated wasteland to reveal itself as displaying only one side of the complex figure's personality. The field's "woven" edge mentioned in the first citation is not only an icon of the heath in general, but also of the contradictory protagonist who embodies the inconsistencies of Schmidt's own work. One already perceives a latent conflict in his decision to build a house in such a disorderly setting, particularly since he characterizes himself as a denouncer of boundaries and boundary posts in a selection from his memoirs: "[Die Eltern] hatten Grenzen in sich und um sich gezogen; sie maßen und wogen : Aber das Maßlose? Das nicht zu Wiegende ? (Da er keine Grenzen in sich fand, haßte er alles, was Grenze und Grenzpfahl war, und wer sie errichtet hatte)." (*SS*, 255) In contrast to his parents, whom the protagonist describes as reliant on the stability of measurements and boundaries, he himself exudes an appreciation of immeasurability and infinitude corresponding to his admiration of the heath. And yet his first step in establishing his homestead quite predictably consists of demarcating the territory of his future home and measuring it out with the help of maps and mathematical instruments:

> [V]iel an der großen Karte 1 :10 000 ergänzt. (Hatte als Ausgangsbasis eine Linie vom schon erwähnten Hochstand bis zum ehemaligen Flakturm, gegenüber Bauer Lüdecke gewählt, und ausreichend Punkte eingemessen; für die kleinen Flächen dazwischen genügten Kompaß, Winkelspiegel und Distanzen). Ich will mein Gebiet immer unter Kontrolle haben. (*SS*, 238)

The very character who presents himself as a critic of boundaries, and whose love of the boundless Lüneburg Heath seems to confirm this animosity, begins the construction of his utopia by delineating its borders, or more specifically borderlines, on a large-scale map. Upon beginning construction, he likens himself to "Robinson mit 2 Flinten," the Defoean castaway whose fastidious bookkeeping Marx identifies as a continuation of the society he has left behind rather than a truly new beginning.[142] (*SS*, 238) Considering the violence of the recent Second World War and the Holocaust, the image of Robinson with his shotguns seems a particularly foreboding association for the creation of a social utopia presumably shed of all the former's injustices. Thus, already in his first novella, one perceives in the protagonist's contradictory thinking an oscillation typical of Schmidt's entire oeuvre, namely a dialectical interaction between the poles of organization and disorder, convention and experimentation, pacifism and violence, to name only a few.

Nevertheless, before addressing the organizing function represented by cartography in Schmidt's work, it is worth drawing out a few more implications of the author's self-characterization as a *Heidedichter*.[143] Though never pushing his argument to the point of geographical determinism, Schmidt and his characters repeatedly insist on the connection between an author's (sometimes adoptive, sometime native) landscape and their writing style. For instance, according to one of Schmidt's protagonists from a short story written shortly after the publication of *Das steinerne Herz*, Goethe was presumably fond of "ambiguous" landscapes: "*Er* war mehr

[142] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*. *Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, ed. Benedict Kautsky (Stuttgart: Kröner, 2011), 58-59.

[143] "[S]tets sind die Themen »Lanschaft, Intellekt, Eros«. Die Staffage is entweder der Antike entnommen, oder der jüngsten Gegenwart; ein Lieblingsraum ist die Heide= und Seenlandschaft Niedersachsens." Arno Schmidt, "Die Dichter unserer Zeit," in *Fragmente: Prosa, Dialoge, Essays, Autobiographisches*, vol. 1 of *Bargfelder Ausgabe: Supplemente* (Bargfeld: Arno Schmidt Stiftung, 2003), 331.

für's mittelgebirgig Bucklige, so diese zweideutigen Sorten Landschaften)."[144] And in one of his many radio dialogues, which discuss the work of canonical and lesser-known authors from Europe and the United States, one of the two fictional interlocutors employs a comparison to Adalbert Stifter and his mountainous landscapes in order to make a plea for the appeal of the lowlands: "Mancher mag es ja schön finden; aber ich konnte die widerliche Majestät der Alpenlinie nur mit Achselzucken betrachten : zu viel Stifter ! […] Gebt mir Flachland, mit weiten Horizonten (hier steckt man je wie in einer Tüte !)."[145] Not only does the "majesty" of the Alps gesture to the overwhelming quality of Stifter's prose; the character differentiates Stifter's *Alpenlinie* form the *weite Horizonte* of his beloved lowlands, a distinction that suggests two fundamentally different notions of natural boundaries, to say nothing of political borders. Of course, the speaking figure is not identified as Schmidt himself, but the typical fictional settings of the author's early works do tend to feature "wide horizons": the heaths of *Schwarze Spiegel* and *Brand's Haide* mentioned above, the vast sea of *Gadir*, the seemingly endless deserts of *Enthymesis* and *Die Gelehrtenrepublik*.

In the case of both *Enthymesis* and *Gadir*, the decision to set the stories in antiquity endows their already immense topologies with an even greater and more uncanny sense of infinitude, owing to the characters' largely speculative conception of the Earth's size and shape: "Wir wissen noch viel zu wenig; so viel aber steht fest, daß in unsäglichen Raumtiefen die fürchterlichen Feuerdrachen stehen, Flammenzungen schwengeln sesamgroß (welch Wort!), Feuerfäuste rasen dröhnend auf Glutbrüste […]."[146] The reference to fire-breathing dragons is likely an anachronistic

[144] Arno Schmidt, *Goethe und einer seiner Bewunderer*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 2, 201.

[145] Arno Schmidt, "Verschobene Kontinente," 63.

[146] Arno Schmidt, *Gadir oder Erkenne dich selbst*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 1, 60.

allusion to the sea monsters featured in medieval *mappa mundi*, early maps with images and texts that were treated predominantly as literary products rather than operational tools.[147] Interestingly, Philostratos, the narrator of *Enthymesis*, appears to associate such mystical depths with a crude conception of mathematical infinity, which might offer a bridge between the seemingly positivistic and fantastical poles of Schmidt's writing:

> [M]it 6 beginnen unendlich viele Zahlen, mit 62 schon weniger, mit 62457 nur noch einige, mit 6245763016 keine mehr, die ihr Pöbel kennt; und dahinter tauchen aus unendlichen Zahlentiefen mehr auf, mehr auf, mehr […]. Ich habe früher einmal zu Eratosthenes geäußert : das Kennzeichen des Geistes ist, daß er die Unendlichkeit will; nun sei die Scheibe unendlicher als die Kugel, als müsse die Erde eine Scheibe sein. Und fügte ungeduldig hinzu, ob er nicht mitfühle, wie fürchterlich es wäre, wenn man eine Kugeloberfläche einmal fertig entdeckt hätte?"[148]

A student of the ancient Greek mathematician Eratosthenes, the inventor of geography and the first to calculate the Earth's circumference, Philostratos has been sent with a group of his peers to survey the unknown territory stretching from the Mediterranean coast to the Sahara Desert. But the protagonist rejects his teacher's as yet unproven, though widely accepted, conjectures about the Earth's spherical form, adhering instead to a flat Earth cosmography that conceives of the planet as an unending "disk." Though some of his rationales for this supposition appear grounded in mathematical reasoning, the chief basis for his belief, as indicated by the passage above, is the presumption of a harmonious correspondence between the human mind and the external world, the former marked by its inexhaustibility. It is thus no surprise that the most common landscapes of Schmidt's oeuvre, whose works according to the author himself represent "Versuch[e] einer konformen Abbildung von Gehirnvorgängen," are variations on the boundless heath. (B, 164) And

[147] Jorg Dünne, "Map Line Narratives," in *Literature and Cartography: Theories, Histories, Genres*, ed. Anders Engberg-Pedersen (Cambridge, USA: MIT Press, 2017), 361.

[148] Arno Schmidt, *Enthymesis oder W.I.E.H.*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe 1*, vol. 1, 15

as noted previously, the 'heathen' spaces of Schmidt's writing also appear to correspond to the dream-like element of his prose, which Philostratos associates with a limitless expanse in an observation following a dream sequence: "[A]m Tage ist der Geist wie ein Schiffer auf einem Fluß, und der Nachen treibt; im Traum, zur Nacht, kann er aussteigen und über die Fläche des Zeitenstromes dahinschweifen [...]."[149] The heath as a common topographical motif in Schmidt's work thus provides a spatial correlate for the elements of his writing opposed to regimentation and rule. It is, at least as Schmidt presents it, a counterpart to the restrictive space of the border as conventionally conceived.

**III. Maps and Cartographic Distortion**

Whereas the heath and similarly endless spaces have often been affiliated with the unbridled imaginativeness of Schmidt's prose, critics and scholars have perceived the reccurring cadastral plans and ordnance maps of his work as products of a scientistic naturalism. Naturalism is a label that has frequently been assigned to Schmidt's work, one which has led an uncomfortable coexistence alongside the more lyrical and experimental features of his writing.[150] In their commentary on *Schwarze Spiegel*, Lutz Hagestedt and André Kischel have synthesized Schmidt's romantic imagination and scientific precision in the image of the *schwarze Spiegel* themselves, which they read as a simultaneous allusion to the *dunkler Widerschein* of E.T.A. Hoffmann's famous *geschliffener Spiegel* as well as to the *Schwarzspiegel* employed by baroque artists to achieve a "»naturalistische« Genauigkeit" in their paintings.[151] Both are mirrors that, to a certain

[149] Ibid., 11.

[150] See Torsten Schmandt, "Das Phantastische in Arno Schmidts Frühwerk," *Zettelkasten* 15 (1996), 35-54.

[151] Lutz Hagestedt & André Kischel, *Herr der Welt. Kommentierendes Handbuch zu Arno Schmidts Schwarze Spiegel* (Munich: Belleville Verlag, 2009), 22-3.

extent, misrepresent and reorient the objects they reflect, but one does so in a manner that produces a realist effect. Unlike Hagestedt and Kischel, Theodor Adorno, who had agreed to write an essay on Schmidt's *Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas* for Alfred Andersch's journal *Texte und Zeichen*, could not reconcile these two stylistic tendencies of Schmidt's work into a unified image and was discomfited by the author's "Vermittlung […] zwischen dem mehr oder minder naturalistischen Motiv und dem Konstruktiven."[152] With regard to both of these readings, one must ask whether naturalistic reflection, so put, is an appropriate model to apply to Schmidt's work, or whether a subject-oriented projection might more accurately characterize the author's overarching aesthetic philosophy, as the following passage from *Das steinerne Herz* suggests:

> Wir haben Alles mit Schmerzen versehen : das Licht »verbrennt«; der Schall »erstirbt«; der Mond »geht unter«; der Wind »heult«; der Blitz »zuckt«; der Bach »windet sich« ebenso wie die Straße. / Mein Herz pumpte die Nacht aus : Blödsinnige Einrichtung, daß da ständig sonne lackrote Schmiere in uns rum feistet ! N steinernes müßte man haben, wie beim Hauff. (Die Wand drüben hüstelte)." (*SH*, 70)

Admittedly, a few of these figurative verbs are not anthropomorphic, but the main import of the narrator's reflection on colloquial language is that even non-poetic language casts the disposition of the speaker into the object of description. Moreover, the external world enveloping Eggers is a product of his own interiority; his heart has "pumped out the night," which is quite distinct from his surroundings merely reflecting his gloomy thoughts.

The creative capacity of the human subject as understood by Schmidt is not limited to poetic language but extends to the very modes of representation associated with the author's naturalistic tendencies: maps and reference works. Just as language helps to furnish the objects it labors to describe, maps aid in constructing the territory they are meant to represent. In his short

[152] Cited in Arno Schmidt, *Der Briefwechsel mit Alfred Andersch*, ed. Bern Rauschenbach (Zurich: Haffman, 1985), 85-6.

essay "Der Dichter und die Mathematik," Schmidt ranks himself among writers like James Fenimore Cooper and Adalbert Stifter that he describes as "gekettet an Daten und Namen," many of whom were engaged with land surveying in one way or another.[153] Josef Huerkamp has demonstrated the manner in which Schmidt's conception of being tethered to data manifests itself in the author's religious employment of ordnance maps, the coordinates of which sometimes appear in the texts themselves, as in this passage from *Aus dem Leben eines Fauns*: (Die Wälder lagen als blauer trauernder Schweigekranz um meinen Horizont). Das Mondtotenlicht brannte auch ganz schnell ab; die eckigen Siedlungshäuser schielten sanft aus gelben Winkeln, samtgelb in Stuben, ganz weiche Bilder. (Während draußen Wolken starben!). Draht rasselte einmal am Zaun. Halb-Laut. All dies geschah überm Meßtischblatt 3023."[154] The reference to "ordnance map 3023" in the final sentence of this passage appears to present this otherwise deformed landscape at a Barthesian zero degree, as mentioned in the previous chapter which is to say with the greatest amount of representational accuracy and the least amount of tropic distortion.[155] Such objective descriptions of subjectively encoded objects and places arise frequently in Schmidt's writing and initially seem to ironically indicate the needless artifice of his style: "Mond : als stiller Steinbuckel im rauhen Wolkenmoor. Schwarze Spiegel lagen viel umher; Zweige forkelten mein Gesicht und troffen hastig. (‹Hat viel geregnet› heißts wohl auf Einfachdeutsch)." (*SS*, 213) And yet to call the statement "Hat viel geregnet" a one-to-one translation of the preceding language into plain German neglects the incommensurability between these two depictions of the soggy heath, both of which

[153] Arno Schmidt, "Der Dichter und die Mathematik," in *Essays und Aufsätze*, 359.

[154] Arno Schmidt, *Aus dem Leben eines Fauns*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 1, 313; see also Josef Huerkamp, *„Gekettet an Daten und Namen":. Drei Studien zum ‚authentischen' Erzählen in der Prosa Arno Schmidts* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1981), 33-109.

[155] "The aim here is to go beyond Literature by entrusting one's fate to a sort of basic speech, equally far from living languages and from literary language proper." Barthes argues that a truly "amodal" form of writing is impossible, as all language employs metaphor and is steeped in convention. Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 77.

constitute distinct styles with their own unique tones and modes of presentation. In a similar manner, one must acknowledge that the *Meßtischblatt* subjects the landscape in question to a process of transformation, distorting it in the same manner as the surrounding figurative language. In order to project parts of the Earth's curved surface onto a sheet of paper, the area must be flattened by means of mathematical functions that maintain particular elements of the mapped terrain to the detriment of others. For instance, conformal maps, like the Mercator projection, preserve angles while allowing for a slight distortion of area. In light of this observation, one must ask whether the purportedly positivistic elements of Schmidt's work, the data points or *Daten* to which he is "chained," are not in fact akin to the distortion one encounters in Expressionist poetry, for instance, though the latter is not subject to the same presumably trans-subjective standards as ordnance maps.

Aside from their more fundamental preoccupation with the transformative process of cartographic representation, Schmidt's texts also frequently draw attention to the way in which these maps productively stray from the area they are meant to recreate, as suggested by the displaced trigonometric points in *Schwarze Spiegel* and as Eggers himself confirms while wandering through Ahlden with his cadastral plan in hand: "*Aber hier ? ! : Der Neubau ? ? ! !:* der war doch tatsächlich auf meiner Katasterkarte nicht eingezeichnet !" (*SH*, 48) In the latter instance, Eggers quickly corrects the error to ensure the cadastral plan's functionality, but other erroneous maps are collected or admired despite—and even sometimes because of—their defects. In fact, any of Schmidt's figures are attracted to 'defective' maps, be it as bona fide expressions of their era or as inventions that provide a fictional platform for further creation. Their verisimilitude thus drawn into question, the maps become intertexts worthy of their own attention, rather than mere transparent tools of mediation. An instructive example of the generative

erroneousness of maps (and geodesy in general) in Schmidt's work can be observed in the novella written immediately before *Das steinerne Herz*, *Kosmos oder Vom Berge des Nordens*, which has its concrete topographical basis in the sixth century *Christian Topography* of Cosmas Indicopleustes, one of the few educated medieval Europeans who defended the idea of a flat earth cosmology. As already indicated in the preceding discussion of *Gadir* and *Enthymesis*, quite a few of Schmidt's early short stories build off of ancient and, by contemporary standards, scientifically inaccurate works of geodesy that provide him with textual foundations for alternative structures of reality.[156] In his juvenilia, one finds an illuminating passage from a short story entitled *Der Rebell*, part of which the author later integrated into the previously cited passage from *Schwarze Spiegel*:

> (Da er keine Grenzen in sich fand, haßte er alles, was Grenze und Grenzpfahl war, und wer sie errichtet hatte; die Kugel mehr als die Fläche. Obwohl er in späteren Jahren ein eifriger Rechner wurde, war es doch bezeichnend, daß er nur die geheimnisvollen unendlichen Zahlen – Logarithmen – liebte, und im tiefsten Herzen stets der Erdscheibe der Griechen zugetan blieb.)[157]

One can read this passage as yet another suggested model for merging the seemingly contradictory features of the author's work (i.e. mathematical exactitude and fantastical irreality), a combination not as clearly connoted by the description of his texts as "gekettet an Daten und Namen." In this story, the protagonist's preoccupation with mathematics does not arise from a desire to better understand the concrete empirical world, but out of a fascination with the infinitude he perceives in his own imagination and sees reflected in logarithms and the flat earth cosmologies of antiquity. *Der Rebell* thus offers an explicit connection between Schmidt's frequent references to the boundless heath and his apparent penchant for productively faulty maps.

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[156] In his work on literature from the early modern era, Jörg Dünne has identified inaccurate and fantastical maps as a longstanding source of poetic inspiration. See Jörg Dünne, *Die kartographische Imagination. Erinnern, Erzählen und Fingieren in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2011).

[157] Arno Schmidt, *Der Rebell*, in *Juvenilia*, vol. 4 of *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, 363.

The descriptor "gekettet an Daten und Namen," when brought into conversation with Schmidt's fictional writings, reveals itself to signify much more than mere slavish fidelity to the empirical world or an uncritical veneration of scientific data and official reference works. Moreover, it necessarily impacts the author's engagement with or representation of national borders, particularly with regard to the systems border between the Eastern and Western blocs. Just as the original land survey of Hannover began in the decade after that kingdom's establishment, so were the 1950s a period of intensive cartographic work and debate, as the two newly founded German states needed not only concrete borders but also cartographic representations to defend their dueling territorial sovereignties. As Matthew D. Mingus puts it in his historical treatment of postwar German geography, "Contentious spaces needed clear maps."[158] Of course, one of the chief functions of mapmaking is the official delineation of borders, an aspect of which Schmidt was keenly aware. A forceful statement by the protagonist of *Das steinerne Herz* proves illuminating in this regard: "Wer die Sein=setzende Kraft von Namen, Zahlen, Daten, Grenzen, Tabellen, Karten nicht empfindet, tut recht daran, Lyriker zu werden; für beste Prosa ist er verloren : hebe Dich hinweg !" (*SH*, 46) Setting aside the genre-related claim put forward here, this proclamation places the concept of *Grenzen* in the same category as names, dates, numbers, and maps. One could argue then that being "chained to dates and names" also implies being circumscribed by national, regional, and other kinds of administrative borders, which are almost exclusively drawn by the politically motivated agents of history. Naturally, such a 'prosaic' mode of being would appear openly at variance with the hatred of "alles, was Grenze und Grenzpfahl war." And yet the above-cited declaration is uttered by the very figure that appears to pass with ease over the seemingly hermetic boundaries of Cold-War Europe. The protagonist's reference to

[158] Matthew D. Mingus, *Remapping Modern Germany after National Socialism, 1945-1961* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2017), 125.

the "Sein=setzende Kraft" of these various designations highlights their arbitrary character, which is subject to alteration. In view of the city of Lubań (formerly German Lauban), for instance, one sees how names, like borders, shift over time. In an essay from 1958, Schmidt tracks the 'movement' of Silesian cities as intimated by various encyclopedias:

> [B]eim alten Hübner liegt sie noch in »Chur=Sachsen, am Flusse Queis«; im Knaur ist es eine »Kreisstadt in Schlesien«; ich besitze aber, wie schon gesagt, auch das vom ‹Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig, 1957› und in dem steht : »Polnische Kreisstadt in der Woiwodschaft Wrocław, an der Kwisa, östl. von Zgorzelec« (dann folgen noch ein paar statistische Angaben). Erläuternd sei bemerkt, daß ‹Wrocław› früher ‹Breslau› hieß, und ‹Zgorzelec› ‹Ost=Görlitz› : Städte kommen viel rum ![159]

The nickname *altes Hübner* refers to the time-honored *Reales Staats- Zeitungs und Conversations-Lexicon*, first published in 1704, whereas the second edition of the *Knaurs Lexikon* was published in the Federal Republic in 1951 and the encyclopedia of the "Verlag Enzyklopädia Leipzig" was a GDR publication. Thus Lubań/Lauban does not only shift over time, but also in accordance with the official lexicons of East and West Germany.[160] The state of being "chained to dates and names" might therefore be more dynamic than originally assumed, particularly for figures that seem to have the contradictory definitions and proofs of various reference works at their immediate disposal.

The phrase "Sein=setzende Kraft" is, in fact, taken from Max Bense, who had used it in an essay from 1952 praising Schmidt and whose philosophy of science highlighted "das Schöpferische" in the act of cognition.[161] The "being-positing" force of names indicated in the

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[159] Arno Schmidt, "Hände weg vom Lexikon!" in *Essays und Aufsätze*, 413.

[160] It is worth noting Schmidt's neglect of Polish definitions of the city.

[161] Bense, a close friend of Schmidt, recognized in *Brand's Haide* "[d]ie echte seinsetzende Kraft der Zahlen, in der Form von Kalenderdaten, Uhrzeitenangaben und geodätischen Maßen […]." Max Bense, *Plakatwelt. Vier Essays* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1952), 19.

passage above, however, appears to refer more to political-geographical labels of ownership and belonging than acts of cognition. To apply the name Wrocław, as opposed to Breslau, to the city located at 51° 6' 28.3788" N, 17° 2' 18.7368" E is to assign it to one side of a fiercely debated geographic boundary. And the telling omission of the adjective *polnisch* in the West German *Knaurs Lexikon*, as opposed to the "Verlag Enzyklopädie Leipzig," already hints at the Federal Republic's disapproval of the loss of former German territory.[162] However, this awareness of terminological or positional relativism, if one may call it that, arguably ensures that both Schmidt and his equally informed protagonist Eggers are by no means blindly deferential to reference works, be they *Staatshandbücher* or ordnance maps. Eggers is not a mere collector of reference works but, like Schmidt himself, a tireless reorganizer of the information contained in various sources: It is his intention to convert the statistical data gathered in Ringklib's *Hof- und Staatshandbuch für das Königreich Hannover*, among other reference works, into a "*Große Kartei*" systematized in keeping with Egger's own (seemingly arbitrary) interests: "*Ja, Fünfzigtausend Karteikarten* müßten hinreichen. […] Die 3.000 interessantesten Leute kriegen je ein Sonderblatt in Leitzordnern." (*SH*, 70) Those familiar with Schmidt's mode of working, in particular his use of *Zettelkasten*, might perceive in Eggers' production of a *Große Kartei* an analogy to the author's own production of texts, which were at least partially founded on the reorganization of information (e.g. bits of overheard speech, literary citations, anecdotal events) that Schmidt had gathered prior to penning his manuscripts. When read together with Eggers' *Große Kartei*, the *Zettelkastentechnik*, a system itself appropriated from Jean Paul and manipulated

[162] The official East German line on the Polish 'recovered territories' was a stance of emphatic endorsement that countenanced none of the resentment promoted by politicians in the Federal Republic. For more on the differing official positions of East and West Germany toward the postwar ethnic cleansing of Germans from Poland, see Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles. Communism, Nationalism and Ethnic Cleansing after the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

to suit the postwar author's own ends, thus presents itself as a textual instance of border-crossing, a transgressive and individually-determined disruption and redrawing of the organizational boundaries laid out by various authorities.

**IV. Outsider, Refugee, *Wessi*?**

Returning to *Das steinerne Herz* and the opening consideration of the protagonist Walter Eggers' position vis-à-vis the two German states, it may be helpful to pay close attention to the moment of his first appearance, namely the first page of the novel. Since this novel, like most of Schmidt's early works, is told from the first-person perspective of a protagonist-narrator, one might assume that Eggers' entry into the book's fictional universe occurs without incident, as his perspective is by necessity already contained in the novel's first word. But the beginning of this text is notoriously opaque; it is less of an opening than it is the slow adjustment of focus on a microscope:

> *In unserem Wassertropfen :* Ein metallisch blauer Kegel kam mir entgegen; im Visierei 2 stumpfe Augenkerne.
> *Dann ein strohgelber :* unter der trüben Plasmahaut schied man breite Zellen, Fangarme hingen; oben hatte es einen Wimpernkopf abgeschnürt, Romanoffskyfarbton; und zog naß tickend an mir vorbei. Volkswagen rädertierten. Nah hinten auf dem Platz trieb auch die Schirmquall. (Genug nu !).
> […]
> *Die Straße rutschte vor mir her.* Ein verweintes Pferd sah mich aus Linsen an. Dann mußte ich aber nach rechts; wie es die alten Maurer gewollt hatten, in der ihrem Steinkanal. (Der Regen perkutierte leiser mein Schädeldach; der Blutstrom golfte; Glieder hingen und standen an mir herum : wenn ‹man wollte›, bewegte sich ein Daumen).
> *Im Ort* : Fachwerk schwarz und rot; (also jetzt systematisch : ich, vom Regen geköpert); (*SH*, 9)

If the heath is the space where hard forms dissolve and the subject loses their orientation, then it would appear only logical that Eggers' arrival in the Lower Saxon town of Ahlden from the surrounding heath would enact a reversal of this process. Whereas the first two paragraphs employ

a language of primitive geometric forms, such as the "metallisch blauer Kegel," and reference membranous microorganisms of varying shape and size, the final two paragraphs begin to list more sharply defined objects with fixed contours, such as the stone canal and the timber framing of a house. In this way, Eggers' entrance into the town is presented as a kind of *Schwellenerfahrung* in Walter Benjamin's sense of the term: the protagonist passes from a dreamlike realm with figurative language connoting fluidity into the waking world of definite forms.[163] The crossing of a boundary is marked here by a transformation in imagery.

Nevertheless, the motif of water introduced at the outset runs its way through the entire narrative, and already in the beginning it offers a dynamic alternative to the obstructive German-German border encountered in the second part of the novel-triptych. Thinking once again with Benjamin, one wonders whether *Das steinerne Herz* actually opens under the sign of a threshold (*Schwelle*) rather than the border, the former associated with liquids where the latter connotes solidity: "Die Schwelle ist ganz scharf von der Grenze zu scheiden. Schwelle ist eine Zone. Wandel, Übergang, Fluten liegen im Worte »schwellen« und diese Bedeutungen hat die Etymologie nicht zu übersehen."[164] Eggers' ability to pass effortlessly over boundaries in their various manifestations, to render them transitions as opposed to impediments, appears to ally him with the opening's watery element. However, in this text, water is not only associated with the liberating capacity to overflow barriers, and a closer look at the passage cited above brings out more negative connotations. Though the narrator Eggers is clearly designated in the first paragraph by the dative pronoun *mir*, he is merely the object of an oncoming "metallic blue cone." And once

[163] "Rites de passage – so heißen in der Folklore die Zeremonien, die sich an Tod, Geburt, an Hochzeit, Mannbarwerden etc. anschließen. In dem modernen Leben sind diese Übergänge immer unkenntlicher und unerlebter geworden. Wir sind sehr arm an Schwellenerfahrungen geworden. Das Einschlafen ist vielleicht die einzige, die uns geblieben ist. (Aber damit auch das Erwachen.)" Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1983), 617.

[164] Ibid., 618.

again in the second paragraph, Eggers appears as a dative pronoun passed "wet ticking" by an unspecified being with a ciliate head. Of course, the abstract character of these opening *Erlebniseinheiten* already indicates the narrator's overwhelming influence with regard to the scene's description. In terms of its poetics, this passage exemplifies the projection model described above and the difficulty faced by the reader consists, to a large extent, in the decryption of Eggers' highly subjective language. But at the level of content, the protagonist is represented as subject to the whims of external forces. Instead of voluntarily strolling into the town, he seems to be conveyed into Ahlden by the street itself, as if being carried down a stream.[165] Furthermore, though Eggers finally appears in the grammatical position of the subject in the third and fourth paragraphs, he is still presented as a passive subject more or less at the mercy of the elements; in the final sentence, he is "twilled" or woven into existence by the downpour. In summation, water not only connotes the transgression of fixed boundaries, but also the helplessness of the individual caught in the hands of an indifferent, uncontrollable fate, a connotation found in the term *Flüchtlingsstrom*, which appears in several of Schmidt's own essays.[166] Nevertheless, it would not be entirely accurate to group Eggers with this "stream of refugees," though he appears to have spent his youth in the now-Polish city of Lubań, like Schmidt himself, as indicated in a brief aside: "das Blut klimperte ferne Schlager (so aus der Jugend; wo man jung war; so Lauban)." (*SH*, 15)

Before reflecting more extensively on Eggers' unique status with regard to the novel's various groups, it is worthwhile to note that the previously cited passage foreshadows one of the

[165] This image is echoed later in the novel, immediately after Eggers and Karl have crossed into the GDR: "*Die Erde* rollte stundenlang unter uns weg, immer in der Richtung, Sternströmung I […]." (*SH*, 61)

[166] "Und nach jeder ‹politischen Umwälzung› noch flossen die Flüchtlingsströme […]." Arno Schmidt, "Flüchtlinge, oh Flüchtlinge !" in *Essays und Aufsätze*, 401. Schmidt is also drawing here on a long tradition of imagery associating migrants with unstoppable floodwaters that must be blocked or at least channeled by strict border regimes. Kristin Kopp discusses portrayal of Polish seasonal laborers as a "Polish flood" in early twentieth century *Ostmarkenromane*. Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 91-92.

novel's central themes, as well as foregrounds one of its formal techniques: *Scheidung*. In this opening passage, the separation or "differentiation" of "wide cells" under a "murky plasma membrane" is, at the level of narrative content, a metaphor for the protagonist's gradual visual and mental adjustment to his surroundings on the rainy road to Ahlden.[167] However, the verb *scheiden* also evokes the recent division of Germany, which in the first edition of *Das steinerne Herz* already appears in the novel's epigraph-poem: "o ewige Spaltung ! Ewig, das heißt : bis zum nächsten Kriege, den – wer wohl? – vom Zaun bricht […]."[168] Together with this separation came the westward shift of Poland's borders and the loss of the former eastern territories of the German Empire, yet another partition that is addressed in Line's retelling of her experience of the postwar population transfer. And of course, since *Scheidung* in the legal sense refers to divorce, this metaphorical cellular division prefigures the dissolution of Frieda and Karl's marriage, which occurs in the novel's final chapter after both spouses have acknowledged and accepted each other's new relationships. This final separation, unlike the previous two, is depicted as positive and productive, resulting in two healthy pairs as opposed to one infirm entity. The model here appears to be mitosis rather than dismemberment, the latter being how Line characterizes the loss of her Silesian homeland. And finally, the decomposition of the novel's prose into discrete *Erlebniseinheiten* manifests this thematic constant at the level of form, and in a manner meant to correspond to the dislocation experienced by the characters. Eggers hints at such a justification for this formal partitioning in his criticism of Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*:

> *Goethes Flüchtlinge ? ! : Écrasez l' Infâme ! !* Wie Herz und Körper stehen bleiben, alle Viertelstunden einmal : *und das in Hexametern* ??!! Das Fließband seiner Scheißverse : da karrt der Schüdderump voll abgemurkster Idyllen, im immer gleichen grobschlächtigen Pumpertakt : pfui Deubel, der Bube ! (*SH*, 84)

[167] Arno Schmidt, *The Stony Heart*, in *Two Novels*, trans. John E. Woods (Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 2011), 3.

[168] Arno Schmidt, "Varianten-Apparat," in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 2, 356-7.

As an alternative to the "conveyor belt of [Goethe's] shitty verses", Schmidt provides a markedly disjointed poetic mode that more accurately captures the fragmentary experience of postwar refugees.

As already noted, Eggers cannot simply be designated a refugee, although he likely stems from Silesia, like Line. As indicated by a few seemingly insignificant details,[169] he appears to reside in or around the city of Saarburg in the French-administrated Saar Protectorate, site of its own border dispute in some ways parallel to that of the Oder-Neisse border, as Karl explains to Eggers during the latter's first subway ride through East Berlin: "»Das kannste hier jeden Abend lesen : der EEne verschachert die Saar; der Andre deklamiert von der Oder=Neiße=‹Friedensgrenze›«." (*SH*, 64) But Eggers does not appear particularly attached to his place of residence; he refers to it only once as "‹Zu Hause›" (*SH*, 12), employing ironic quotation marks, and then fails to mention it again throughout the remainder of the novel. In fact, the protagonist adopts an attitude of principled state of detachment from potential homes as a consequence of his belief in the ideal 'rootlessness' of artists and intellectuals and his anti-patriotic and anti-nationalist political convictions, which he voices in a number of caustic asides:

> ‹Pro Patria› heißt auf Englisch ‹fool's cap›; nachdenklich genug. – Die übliche furnierte Prosa. Die von staatswegen stets erstrebte (und längst wieder erreichte) Einknopfbedienung unserer Literatur. (*SH*, 18)
>
> Sonst hätte man schon aus jenen Zeiten die verzweifelten Flüche gehört, die heute angeblich nur die effeminierten, wurzel= und vaterlandslosen ‹Intellektuellen› austoßen! (*SH*, 29)
>
> Dionysius von Halikarnossos stellt als Hauptforderungen an den Historiker : keine Religion; kein Vaterland; keine Freunde : das kannste haben ! (*SH*, 56)

[169]"Das heißt, ich hatte in Saarburg dem befreundeten Postboten den Karton gegeben: und ihn gebeten, sobald meine Karte einträfe.....)." (*SH*, 12) "*»Rauchen Sie* ne Africaine mit ?« : er kannte die Saarsorte noch nicht, und inhalierte interessiert –, – : »Aber staak ! – – «." (*SH*, 13)

These citations provide only a small sample of the protagonist's critical stance toward the state and all those who presumably kowtow to it. But Eggers extends this posture of conscientious disloyalty to all groups, be they political, economic, cultural, or otherwise: "*Was ‹Solidarität› eigentlich genau heißt ? ! :* »'Tis a greek invocation to call fools into a circle !«." (*SH*, 39) The English sentence is from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and is spoken by Jacques, a character that resembles Eggers in his consistent criticism of the court hierarchy. But more important than the intertextual reference offered by this citation is the gesture that Eggers makes with it: By code-switching and citing a canonical work of English literature, the narrator-protagonist effectively steps out of the "circle" of the German-language tradition and enters a transnational literary space in which English, German, and French intermingle.

Nevertheless, as stated in the current chapter's introduction and as suggested by Uwe Johnson's description of the exploitative political appropriation of fundamentally apolitical subjects addressed in the previous chapter, Eggers does not find himself in a situation that might allow for such an easy exit. In the face of the East-West constellation central to the novel's historical backdrop, one might argue that, from a cultural vantage point, Eggers' repeated invocation of canonical and pulp works of American, British, and French fiction places him squarely within a Western cultural tradition employed by the Western allies as both a tool in the postwar 're-education' of German citizens and a weapon in the Cold War competition against Soviet communism.[170] There is not a single allusion to Russian literature in the entire novel,[171] for

[170] Carsten Kretschmann, *Zwischen Spaltung und Gemeinsamkeit. Kultur im geteilten Deutschland* (Berlin: Bebra Verlag, 2012), 18-20.

[171] In a list of Novel Prize winners containing presumably unworthy recipients, Eggers includes Henryk Sienkiewicz and writes his name "Scienkiewicz". (*SH*, 128) No subsequent editions have corrected this mistake, if it is one.

instance, and East German authors like Johannes Becher and Stefan Hermlin are mentioned solely to indicate the political function of writers in the GDR and their submission to the demands of the Socialist Unity Party. In light of this, one would rightly be skeptical of Eggers' self-characterizations as an outsider, and his outspoken promotion of ideological rootlessness must be tempered with an analysis of the ways in which his evaluations of the GDR show signs of Western bias, despite all claims to the contrary. In comparison to the West German journalist Karsch in Johnson's *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, Eggers demonstrates no desire to understand the German Democratic Republic "von sich aus," nor does he appear particularly aware of the possible hindrances to comprehension posed by his West German perspective. At the beginning of his journey, his observations of life in East Berlin seem more oriented toward dispelling myths perpetuated by the West German media than acquainting himself with East German culture: "*Neugierig draußen :* links die winzig bunten Lämpchen einer Bahnhofswirtschaft, man saß und lachte : den Westnachrichten nach wäre es eigentlich Pflicht der Ostzonenbewohner, bleich und schmutzig auszusehen, wie ? ! – Gegenüber das ‹HO› aus blauen Leuchtröhren." (*SH*, 64)

At a later moment in the trip, after openly criticizing individual elements of SED policy and GDR lifestyle, Eggers even knowingly makes use of a formula of West German criticism while appraising an East German film: "[(J]etzt konnte ich, erlöst und rasch, die Bilder im Schaukasten begrinsen : 1 Mädchen, 5 Jungen und 6 Traktoren). Gut fotografiert, meinetwegen (obwohl ich davon nichts verstand; es hieß im Westen jedenfalls immer so, um das anschließende ‹aber› vorzubereiten) : aber dieses groteske propagandistische Thema wieder !" (*SH*, 81) Eggers' decision to insert this subsequent *aber*-clause, despite its recreation of a West German cliché, could be interpreted as further confirmation of the protagonist's singularity and political non-affiliation; his acknowledgement of the formulaic structure of this critique allows him to employ it while

simultaneously distancing himself from it. However, such explicit awareness is lacking in other descriptions of the GDR, perhaps most plainly in his frequent reference to the East German state as the *Ostzone*, a term used by West German conservative newspapers like *Die Welt* in order to dismiss the German Democratic Republic's claims to state sovereignty.[172] In this regard, Eggers' presumably ironic joy at the sight of the checkpoint Helmstedt-Marienborn and its promise of a return to "Western culture" ("*Und endlich, endlich wieder Westkultur !*") potentially exposes his entrapment within a West German frame of reference that inflects even his protestations against the politics and culture of the Federal Republic of Germany. (*SH*, 103) In addition, despite exhibiting the trappings of sovereign individualism so characteristic of Schmidtian protagonists, Walter Eggers does appear subject to external influences he himself cannot control and that find figurative expression in the novel's opening floodwater imagery. To the contrary of critics who have described Schmidt's narrators as self-contained monads with no susceptibility to a postmodern decentering of the subject,[173] Eggers occasionally even reflects on the unknowable origins of his thoughts and phrasings: "Ein Haufe spitzgliedriger Sternbilder hockte zitternd am caven Horizont : wenn mir der Mond wie ne Aspirintablette vorkommt : bin ich daran schuld, oder Bayer=Leverkusen ? !" (*SH*, 41) This observation admittedly appears banal, but it has the effect of casting the rest of Eggers' presumably self-determined ideations into doubt and undermining his repeated attempts to place himself outside the influence of his current country of residence.

[172] Josef Huerkamp, *»Die große Kartei«*, 328.

[173] See M.R. Minden, *Arno Schmidt. A Critical Study of His Prose* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 36-66. Schmidt's flash fictional monologue "Was soll ich tun" stages an anxiety-ridden meditation on the erosion of the autonomous subject by both literary language and advertising: "Diese Brüder – die Dichter – machen letzten Endes mit Einem, was sie wollen; sei es, daß sie Einem die segensreichen Folgen des regelmäßigen Genusses von Sanella vorgaukeln; sei es, daß man nur noch in ihren Formeln, Wortfügungen, Redensarten stottern kann." Arno Schmidt, "Was soll ich tun ?" in *Kleinere Erzählungen*, 71.

Nevertheless, although Schmidt's protagonist does not engage in the same hermeneutical plumbing of alterity as do Karsch in *Das dritte Buch über Achim* and Zbigniew Herbert in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, Eggers' exposition of the proper role of a writer, pondered over during his stroll from the checkpoint to his makeshift rest area on the demarcation line, calls for the most honest possible depiction of the manifold elements of his historical moment, free of any religious or ideological bias:

> [D]ie Aufgabe des Dichters als Beobachters und Topographen aller möglichen Charaktere und Situationen wäre doch wohl unter anderem auch, diese dann darzustellen wie solche wirklich sind; und nicht wie sie sich etwa den im CVJM vereinigten Gemütern malen mögen ! Ist denn die getreue Schilderung einer Zeit mit ihren typischsten und feinsten Zügen nicht mindestens ebensowichtig, wie meinetwegen die präzise und möglichst vollständig angestrebte Beschreibung aller Arten von Flöhen, Syphilisgeschwüren, oder Heiligenlegenden ? (*SH*, 104-5)

CVJM (*Christlicher Verein Junger Menschen*), the German acronym for the YMCA, embodies here the religiosity that Eggers perceives as a driving force behind Konrad Adenauer's political platform and a fundamental binding agent in the consolidation of a "zu Drei Vierteln katholischer Block" in the West. (*SH*, 83) But Eggers makes the same accusation of close-minded piety on the other side of the border as well, where he uses it as an analogy to characterize the ideological fanaticism of East German socialists. Such occurs in a conversation between Eggers and Line's socialist neighbor Herr Eisendecher. While discussing a recent election, the latter unintentionally reveals that he has participated in a state-organized scheme to rank citizens based on their arrival time at the polls:

> Wer am ersten Tage kam, kriegte einen senkrechten Strich, so : | . Am zweiten Tage gabs das Kreislein : • . Am dritten ein Kreuz : + !« (Er hatte selbst ‹ehrenamtlich› dabei mitgewirkt, und erzählte's als Selbstverständlichkeit.)
> *»Was ? !«* – er öffnete erstaunt das Gesicht, à la ‹Was hat der Unbeschnittene ?›. (*SH*, 97)

The basis of Egger's critique is a religious analogy, which reduces the ideological character of Eisendecher's zealotry to religious belief and projects Eggers' criticism of the FRG onto the GDR.

But the purported similarity between Catholicism and Communism, as manifested in the behavior of their adherents, provides Eggers with at least one basis for his coveted neutrality. The comparison between these two forms of alleged chauvinism draws out a parallel between the two states, one that is repeatedly reflected in the parallelisms offered by various speakers throughout Eggers' trip to East Berlin:

> [D]er EEne verschachert die Saar; der Andre deklamiert von der Oder=Neiße=‹Friedensgrenze› [...]. (*SH*, 63-4)

> *Sehr richtig :* der Westen mit seinem blödsinnigen Fritzwalter=kult! (Allerdings hier dann wieder : diese ‹Helden der Arbeit› : anstatt die Leute ehrlich aufzuklären, daß Arbeit leider ein noch notwendiges Übel sei. (*SH*, 64)

> Wenige sterben und Keiner dankt ab; Churchill, Stalin, Adenauer, der Papst : voller Altersfrechheit, eisiger Rücksichtslosigkeit, und greisenhaftem Eigensinn, reiten sie ihre Völker immer tiefer in Atomunheil und bebrüllte Dienstbarkeit […]. (*SH*, 83)

> [»] Das Ganze nennen Sie also ‹Freie Wahlen› ? !« […] *The other way round :* »Giebt es denn bei Ihnen im Westen : freie Wahlen ? !« Ich mußte mißmutig am Zaun klauben; nee; : ooch nich. (*SH*, 97)

This final parallel construction ("*The other way round*") draws attention to the figure of inversion that lies at the center of Schmidt's portrayal of the two Germanies. The author does not present the GDR as a mere inverted version of the FRG, but he does reveal surprising overlaps between the presumably diametrically opposed states. Whereas Uwe Johnson attempts to overcome the German-German border by way of metaphor, as outlined in the previous chapter, Schmidt levels the divide through chiasmus, as exemplified by Karl's cynical reduction of the two dueling ways of life: "*Aber die Ubiquität des Chauffeurs :* jetzt würdigte ichs zum erstenmal richtig. »Ausschweifender Lebenslauf : auslaufender Lebensschweif« drehte er sofort um, und machte jeden Kommentar wertlos : recht hat er." (*SH*, 64) "Ubiquity" here, as Eggers describes it, refers to Karl's capacity to diminish the distinction between the two states such that he can apply the

same morphological structure to both. It is the ubiquity of the microorganisms encountered on the novel's first page that, like the itinerant morphemes in Karl's derisive chiasmus, continually separate and rejoin in order to form distinct aggregates of like substance.

**V. Crossing the Line**

Though the first boundary Eggers encounters is the unobstructed transitional space between the heath and the town of Ahlden, which he passes over with ease in the novel's opening, the second chapter begins with the somewhat more encumbered crossing of the German-German demarcation line. Riding shotgun in Karl's milk truck, which carries West German milk over the border and deposits its liquid cargo in West Berlin, Eggers and the chauffeur get out at the border checkpoint in Helmstedt-Marienborn, where they are subjected to a series of security checks by the East German People's Police. However, their passage through the checkpoint is preceded by the almost unnoticeable crossing of a historical border: "[(U]nd schon grollte der LKW vorbei; vor strähnigen Äckern; wie das Schild huschte ‹Braunschweig=Nord› übern Mittellandkanal.) *‹Preußen› für ‹Militär› :* der Raubstaat par excellence; und vom Volk instinktiv als solcher gefühlt=erkannt." (*SH*, 57) As Josef Huerkamp has established, this section of the Midland Canal's course marks the historical border between the historical states of Prussia and the Duchy of Braunschweig, which elucidates the sudden and otherwise inexplicable shift in Eggers' interior monologue from the description of the "straggly fields" to Prussian bellicosity.[174] Though the crossing of this boundary calls little attention to itself, it constitutes one aspect of a much larger thematic concern in the novel, namely the historical antagonism between the belligerent Kingdom of Prussia and the Kingdom of Hanover, which Eggers is intent on memorializing with his *Große Kartei*: "Und rege

[174] Josef Huerkamp, *»Die große Kartei«*, 341.

dadurch das Studium Hannovers mehr an, trage durch seine Erwähnung mehr zu seinem Gedächtnis bei […].” (*SH*, 104) Eggers never makes explicit the motivations behind his commemoration of Hanover, and one may assume that he valorizes the kingdom largely because of its refusal to enter into a military alliance with Prussia during the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, a rebuff that culminated in the Prussian occupation and annexation of Hanover that same year and ultimately in the unification of the Reich in 1871. The refugee Line's former home of Silesia was also a part of this historical constellation, as it was the territorial goal of the Austrian military offensive. Eggers' designation of Prussia as "der Raubstaat par excellence" resonates with the protagonist's diatribes against the remilitarization of Adenauer's Bundesrepublik, but the antithesis Prussia-Hanover cannot be mapped so easily onto the relationship between the FRG and the GDR, at least not in the way that Eggers perceives them. Nor does the demonization of Prussia and its annexation of Hanover necessarily signify a refutation of German unification and a reactionary longing for the German Confederation. Instead, the continuing existence of these historic states and borders in the mind of the protagonist speaks to the possibility of affiliations and senses of belonging that need not correspond to his current geopolitical circumstances. At the very least, the appearance of this phantom border or *Phantomgrenze*, as historians like Hannes Grandits and Béatrice von Hirschhausen have dubbed such psychologically enduring former borders, speaks to the historical character and transience of state borders in general, including the inner German demarcation line Eggers is about to cross.[175]

In line with this conceptual attenuation of national boundaries, the short journey from the former Prussian border to the checkpoint does not announce an increasing gravity of tone or

[175] Hannes Grandits, Béatrice von Hirschhausen, Claudia Kraft, Dietmar Müller, & Thomas Serrier, "Phantomgrenzen im östlichen Europa. Eine wissenschaftliche Positionierung," in *Phantomgrenzen. Räume und Akteure in der Zeit neu denken*, ed. idem (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2015), 13-56.

apprehension in the face of imminent examination by foreign law enforcement. On the contrary, Eggers' approach to the demarcation line is accompanied by a burgeoning sense of play and a satirical upending of conventional symbols of authority. The protagonist's description of the small train station outside Braunschweig, where passengers board "inter-zone trains" to Berlin and receive the necessary official forms, introduces this tone of parody: "Beamte hebelten um weiße Formulare : ich möchte wohl auch kleine Fahrkarten verkaufen; ich; Egg : Egg mit der großen russischen Riesenrundschaukel !" (*SH*, 57) It is highly unclear what object Eggers could be describing with the phrase *große russische Riesenrundschaukel*. Nevertheless, the word *Rundschaukel* likely refers to a type of commercial amusement swing, and the implied swinging motion parallels the civil servants' cranking of levers. The effect is that the daunting aura that commonly surrounds official processing is transformed by means of metaphor into an atmosphere of festivity.[176] The subsequent *Erlebniseinheit* continues this development:

> *Schall und Benzinwitterung ringsum :* »Riesenroß mit Eichenlaub & Schwertern« zischte der Chauffeur; meinte hinten den Schnarchenden im Koben. Und vorn füllte uns ein blau geköperter Dämon mit abscheulichen Gebärden den Tank. (Nebenan, auf dem kleinen Platz, moderner Jahrmarkt : Einer ließ sich Luftgewehrbolzen in die nackte Brust schießen : patsch ! – : und ergriff den bunten Federbusch; und zog sich eine Hauttüte lang und spitz heraus : christlich=abendländische Kultur !) (*SH*, 57)

The transition between paragraphs, which is elsewhere rather abrupt, is softened by the presence of alliteration and repeated morphemes ("großen russischen Riesenrundschaukel […] *Benzinwitterung ringsum :* »Riesenroß"); the fragmentation of Schmidt's prose is surprisingly less pronounced when depicting the area abutting the border. The milk truck has briefly stopped to refuel at a gas station on the western side of the checkpoint and the protagonist's envelopment in sonic discord and the aroma of fuel creates a distorting shroud through which the subsequent

[176] One could compare the levity of this passage with the seriousness of tone and aura of fear that accompany similar border-crossing scenes found throughout Wolfgang Koeppen's *Nach Russland und anderswohin*, for instance.

observations are made. In effect, this haze of gasoline appears to lay the foundation for the topsy-turvy parody of the West that follows: Karl's expletive takes the imagery of the Knight's Cross—a Nazi-era military decoration that was in the process of being "cleansed" of its negative connotations and re-sanctified in conservative circles—and turns it on its head by ironically applying it to his indolent co-driver.[177] The "modern festival" in the town square adjoining the gas station presents Eggers with a caricatured scene of violence that he interprets as the epitome of "Christian=Occidental culture." Even the "blue-twilled demon" of a gas station attendant, whose "abhorrent gestures" recall the bawdy Malebranche of Dante's *Inferno*, fits neatly into this vulgar universe of grotesque distortion.

The purpose of these observations is to highlight the fringe character of the German-German borderland as Schmidt depicts it. In many ways, this borderland resembles the quintessentially Schmidtian topography of the heath as described previously in this chapter: As opposed to delineating a space in which the West German culture's self-representations become more emphatic, it stages the breakdown of these icons and the corrosion of their seemingly authoritative character.[178] But more than the mere disintegration of stable forms, a dissolution that is typical of the heath, this margin of the FRG stages a travesty of the nation's recently rediscovered militarism and other aspects of official culture. The national border here resembles the metaphorical one referenced by the seventeenth-century satirist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg in his anthropological definition of the human as a *Zwittergestalt*, a curiosity of nature: "Auf der

[177] Paul Schäfer, "Bundeswehr und Rechtsextremismus," *Wissenschaft & Frieden*, no. 2 (1998), https://www.wissenschaft-und-frieden.de/seite.php?dossierID=054.

[178] As the political scientist Matthew Longo argues, for the modern nation-state the border is a site for the performance of a national identity that is allowed to become more diffuse the farther it is from the periphery. Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen after 9/11* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 41-42.

Gräntze liegen immer die seltsamsten Geschöpfe."[179] And yet the "odd creatures" of this borderland are no different in kind from those that populate the interior; they are merely enfolded in derisive humor rather than respectful solemnity. In this way, the festive atmosphere of Schmidt's German-German borderland resembles Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the Roman and medieval carnivals in their inversion of the values of official culture:

> The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions that determine the structure and order of ordinary, that is noncarnival, life are suspended during carnival: what is suspended first of all is hierarchical structure and all the forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette connected with it […]."[180]

Though Bakhtin's description of Roman Saturnalia and medieval folk festivals draws attention to the temporally circumscribed nature of the these cyclical rituals, as they were only briefly permitted by authorities as a relief valve for social unrest, the unrestrained character of these events, which reveled in what Bakhtin calls "*carnivalistic mésalliances*," erases the dividing line between high and low, inside and outside:

> All things that were once self-enclosed, disunified, distanced from one another by a noncarnivalistic hierarchical worldview are drawn into carnivalistic contacts and combinations. Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid."[181]

It is arguably only a short step from the carnivalistic *mésalliances* of Bakhtin's theory to Schmidt's chiastic "ubiquity" illustrated in the previous section. Both devices chip away at divisions and enable the free intermingling of elements previously relegated to either side of a conceptual partition. It is thus no surprise that the borderland between the two German states is predominantly presented under the sign of the carnival.

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[179] Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, *Schriften und Briefe*, vol. 2, ed. Wolfgang Promies, (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1968), 33.

[180] Mikhail Bakhtin. *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. & trans. Caryl Emerson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 123.

[181] Ibid.

Moreover, the carnivalesque atmosphere does not appear to stop at the border itself. The protagonist already offers a hint of the boundary-leveling analogies to come with his portrayal of the uniforms of the People's Police:

> Die Volkspolizei in starker Khakifarbe (»das sinn'ie Kasernierten.«); dann noch eine andere Rasse von Graublauen; (na, an der Saar tragen die katholischen Geistlichen Uniform, mit ganz eigentümlichen Sturzhelmen. Swedenborg hat mal sowas beschrieben.)" (*SH*, 58)

The comparison is equally reprehensible for both sides, as the official religious position of the GDR was staunchly atheist and antagonistic toward organized religion, while the equation of the Catholic clergy with police forces would likely be received with offense in the Catholic West. Furthermore, the eroticism already intimated by the gas station attendant's refueling of the milk truck is made explicit in Eggers' detail of a policewoman closely examining his private possessions:

> *Sie* blätterte lange im Ringklib. […] *Schloß ihn; ließ ihn* langsam (fast erotisch ?) in den dunklen Lederschlitz zurückgleiten; – ich versuchte meinen Augen den Ausdruck dienstlicher Anbetung zu verleihen : ! (hatte aber Schwierigkeiten damit : eine lange Volkspolizistin im Bett ? : das erschien irgendwie – – : unzulässig, wie ? Worte wie ‹strafbar› fielen mir ein; ‹untergraben›; (hübsche Hüften hatte sie aber bestimmt); – –; nee : ich kam im Augenblick nicht auf die präzise Definition meiner Empfindung.) : »Ja bitte ? – – «." (*SH*, 58-9)

In comparison to far more obscene sequences from the medieval tales of Francois Rabelais, for instance, this description already seems rather tame and self-censored, which might explain the presence of copious dashes simulating suggestive omissions from Eggers' otherwise omnipresent train of thought. Nevertheless, a subsequent quip by Karl approaches Rabelaisian impropriety: "»Was wollte die Giaurin ?« : Karl, neugierig; und wieherte : »Besondere Kennzeichen ? : Hätts man gesacht ‹Bißnarben in Schaft und Eichel› !«" (*SH*, 59) And even with regard to the previous passage, it is important to note that such sexual imagery—the neologism *Lederschlitz* contains a vulgar reference to sexual anatomy—had already gotten Schmidt into serious legal trouble

following the publication of his 1953 short story *Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas*, the erotic elements of which the chief prosecutor of Trier described in his indictment as "geeignet […], das Scham- und Sittlichkeitsgefühl gesund empfindender Menschen in geschlechtlicher Hinsicht zu verletzen."[182] Though the word *verletzen* as such does not appear in the passage cited above, other expressions such as *strafbar* and *unzulässig* appear to refer not only to the presumed response of the female border guard to the proposition of such an inappropriate act, but also to the potential reception of this scene and its lewd phrasing by Schmidt's contemporary readership. Read in this way, the verb *untergraben*, supposedly hinting at the "undermining" of the police officer's authority implied by such an act, thereby acquires a broader significance and signals one of the larger goals of such writing: to subvert the potency of religious morality aligned with the process of state-building and the consolidation of Adenauer's Christian Democratic rule in the new Federal Republic.

Despite the levelling of the German-German divide by way of chiasmus, satire, and historicization, traditional motifs of border-crossing are nevertheless still layered onto the checkpoint sequence. For instance, Eggers' passage through the checkpoint does feature some of the elements of threshold-crossing that Joseph Campbell has identified as common to various folk mythologies:

> [T]he hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the 'threshold guardian' at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. Such custodians bound the world in the four directions—also up and down—standing for the limits of the hero's present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond them is darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe. […] The regions of the unknown (desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc.) are free fields for the projection of unconscious content. Incestuous *libido* and patricidal *destrudo* are thence reflected back against the individual and his society in forms

[182] Cited in Giesbert Damaschke, "Arno Schmidt, ›Seelandschaft mit Pocahontas‹," in *ASml-News: Informationen & Neuigkeiten zu Arno Schmidt und Umfeld*, accessed February 8, 2020, www.asml.de/artikel/seelandschaft.php.

> suggesting threats of violence and fancied dangerous delight—not only as ogres but also as sirens of mysteriously seductive, nostalgic beauty.[183]

The solemn atmosphere of Campbell's threshold is nearly the opposite of Bakhtin's carnival; they appear to represent inverse attitudes toward a similar experience of border-crossing. For example, the freewheeling sexuality of the medieval folk festival reappears in Campbell's description in the form of "sirens of mysteriously seductive, nostalgic beauty." The sexual beings that, under Bakhtin's model, had offered a potential liberation from the rigid moral codes of official tradition now represent threats to the order and stability of the subject. And in fact, though the carnivalesque ambience tends to predominate in Schmidt's narrative, both perspectives are simultaneously present in Eggers' depiction, particularly considering the border's gesture toward the unknown:

> "Drüben das Erfrischungsbaräckchen mit HO=Preisen. Auch das erste große Transparent, weiße Blockbuchstaben auf Blau gegen die EVG : ich hab schon Alles mögliche erlebt : im Granatwerferfeuer gelegen; mich vor Alfred Döblin gebückt; mit ner Nonne Tischtennis gespielt : aber das hier noch nich !"[184] (*SH*, 60)

This sense of unfamiliarity explains Eggers' momentary feelings of anxiety, which accompany his more flippant, off-color remarks during the inspection: "Sie stand noch über meinen Tuschkasten gebeugt, der sie lebenslustig anäugelte (die Schraubzwingen fand sie gottlob nicht; sonst hätte sies doch wohl für Diebeswerkzeug gehalten. Was ja in gewissem Sinne . . .: schweig stille, mein Herze!)" (*SH*, 59) And the designation of the female police officer as an "Einherierin" (*SH*, 58), a female warrior from Norse mythology, and the description of her "hypnotische[r] Schlangenblick"

[183] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 71-2.

[184] The unelucidated mention of the EVG or *Europäische Verteidigungsgemeinschaft*, an ultimately failed plan for a Western European army that was initiated in 1950 and abandoned in 1954, speaks to *Das steinerne Herz*'s generic designation as a 'historical novel' featuring political debates that would have been familiar to Schmidt's contemporaries.

(*SH*, 59) add to the characterization of the checkpoint as an otherworldly space peopled with mythological figures quite the opposite of the Bakhtin's sensuous, earthly bodies.[185]

Furthermore, Campbell's account of threshold-crossing and its function in mythological tales draws out yet another fundamental element of Eggers' passage through the checkpoint, namely the narratological role of the threshold as an obstacle at which either the strength or the wits of the hero must be proven. It is this facet of the threshold that Campbell borrows from the Dutch anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, whose seminal study *Les rites de passage* not only explores rituals performed during the passage of "semi-civilized" borders but also analyzes traditional rites that mark the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood.[186] Both Campbell and van Gennep see these two distinct transitional experiences, one spatial and the other temporal, combined in the narratological unit of threshold-crossing, such that the challenge the hero must overcome in order to pass through the threshold simultaneously enacts their transition into another stage of development. Though Eggers arguably does not develop over the course of the novel, the numerous boundaries that he crosses, particularly in the novel's second chapter, do appear to represent proving grounds for his mental acuity and cunning. The checkpoint at Helmstedt-Marienborn is not the only boundary to present the protagonist with such a challenge. Eggers is granted entry to the East German State Library solely due to his outwitting of the porters

[185] This mythic depiction of the border corresponds more closely to Koeppen's description of the solemn border-crossings of *Nach Russland und anderswohin*, which occasionally merge mythology and history in a manner that grants the contingent diplomatic divides an ontological heft, despite the author's presumed rejection of political-geographical *Schilder.* Though his voyage to the Eastern Bloc contains fewer references to ancient mythology, his crossing into Franco's Spain assumes mythic dimensions in his retelling: "Ein Tunnel führt nach Spanien. In der Finsternis des Tunnels erklärt sich der Name [der Grenzstadt] Cerbère als von Kerberos herrührend, dem vielköpfigen, schlangenhaarigen Hund, der niemandem den Einzug in das Haus des Pluto wehrt, aber den Austritt keinem gestattet. Eine andere Sonne scheint jenseits des Tunnels. Ein anderes Licht dringt durch die Fenster." Wolfgang Koeppen, "Ein Fetzen von der Stierhaut," in *Nach Rußland und anderswohin*, 16.

[186] Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), 18.

and his successful completion of a scientific "entrance exam" by the expert librarian who serves as the institution's "threshold guardian[s]":

> *Die altbekannte Schinkel=Front* der Staatsbibliothek : […] ([U]nd ich atmete doch einmal tief durch, ehe ich die stark abgefederte Tür eindrückte : hier war der Ringklib drin !) – Ich hatte ja vorher ausgiebig schriftlich angefragt (selbstverständlich auch noch nach Anderem; zur Ablenkung, cela va sans dire !). Erstmal gab ich die Aktentasche in der Garderobe ab; nur mein ‹Schreibmaterial› raus : in der mächtigen Briefmappe sah man *mein* Exemplar überhaupt nicht ! Außen drauf das rührend einfache Federkästchen, wie ? (da sieht man gleich lächelnd : *Der* ist harmlos ! – So !).
>
> *Am Drehkreuz : 2* Portiers in grauen Kitteln bewachten einander. Ich lehnte die Zahlung der geforderten einen Ostmark erst einmal rundweg ab; haushälterisch=besorgt (da gilt man als gelehrter armer Schlucker; sehr gut !). »Ich bin angemeldet.« Er griff mißtrauisch zum Telefon in seiner Zelle : »Herrn Doktor Münzner bitte – – : Ja ! – – : Herr Doktor ? : Da ist hier ein Herr ä=Eggers. – Der Ihnen vor einiger Zeit geschrieben haben will« [...]
>
> *Ein langer Raum (mindestens 25 Meter !) :* Regale an allen Wänden. […] Er tat 2 geschäftige Schritte : kam ich also zu ihm, in seine Ecke, und bestand die letzte wissenschaftliche Aufnahmeprüfung : Rothert; Thimme; v. Meyer ‹Verfassungs= und Verwaltungsgeschichte Hannovers› : es genügte vollständig. (*SH*, 74-5.)

As this passage demonstrates, the series of boundaries that Eggers must cross in order to gain access to the prized statistical handbook might have impeded the advances of a less wily thief, which is what Schmidt's hero or "collector" ultimately turns out to be. But much like the checkpoint in Helmstedt-Marienborn, the multi-stage entrance to the state library becomes a venue for Eggers to put his guile and intellectual savvy on display. And not only does the German-German border represent merely one of many sporting hurdles for the protagonist, it ultimately grants him the amnesty and protection needed to steal from the German Democratic Republic without facing consequences. Seen from this perspective, Eggers is not only a thief, but a smuggler, and the postwar separation of Germany thus appears to him not so much a loss as an opportunity.[187] He is arguably no different than the West German citizens he criticizes at one point in the novel,

[187] For more on the role of smuggling in *Das steinerne Herz*, see Stephan Kraft, "Nicht mitten hindurch, sondern darüber hinweg und auf beiden Seiten zugleich. Zur deutsch-deutschen Grenze in Arno Schmidts Roman *Das steinerne Herz,*" in *Grenzen im Raum – Grenzen in der Literatur*, 127-146.

consumers who take advantage of the favorable exchange rate and the lower cost of living in the East to buy cheaper goods there: "»Die Hausfrauen fahren rüber und erstehen für 18 Pfennig West ihr tägliches Dreipfundbrot« : […] Und dann spotten unsere Sender noch hinterhältig drüber, daß die wissenschaftliche Schwierigkeiten haben ? : doll !" (*SH*, 80) At the same time, in order for the smuggling operation to be successful, the very border that Eggers' employment of satire and chiasmus negates must regain the political-geographical density attributed to it by postwar diplomatic agreements and treaties. In this respect, these borders, which are occasionally diluted by the devastating effects of Rabelaisian satire but later re-thicken as test sites for the hero's prowess, demonstrate the same contradictory qualities as all of the other elements of Schmidt's prose: To perceive them as merely nullified by the jests and machinations of the protagonist would be to overlook Eggers' exploitation of those borders' very real existence, to say nothing of figures like Line who have suffered from the postwar delineation of new borders.

**VI. Forgery and the Frontier**

The inner German demarcation line provides Eggers with the opportunity to steal Ringklib's statistical handbook from the East German State Library, which, had it been located in the West, would have had the jurisdiction to track down the thieving collector and reclaim its lost possession. However, not all of the borders described in *Das steinerne Herz* merely enable the characters to pursue their aims without inhibitions or the threat of consequences. In fact, as soon as the reader turns their attention to Line's storyline and the ethnic cleansing of postwar Silesia, the figure of the border quickly loses any emancipatory connotations.[188] As already mentioned, Line is one of

[188] This is the problem with Stephan Kraft's and Johanna M. Gelberg's insightful interpretations of *Das steinerne Herz*: Both authors' concentration on the German-German border and Eggers' side of the narrative leads to the characterization of the border as predominantly a space of liberating play. Johanna M. Gelberg, *Poetik und Politik der Grenze. Die Literatur der deutsch-deutschen Teilung seit 1945*, 140-151.

the many displaced persons from the formerly German territory of Silesia living in the German Democratic Republic after the war. And unlike Eggers, who may have spent his youth in the now-Polish region, the agreement between the Allies to redraw the border between Germany and Poland along the Oder-Neisse line is felt by Line as a failure of the "state" to protect her and her property: *»‹Der Staat› ? ? :* Der Staat iss doch mein Feind !« erklärte sie unbefangen=erstaunt : »Der macht doch mit uns, was er will : und meist das Falsche ! Denken sich die Idioten denn, wir merkten das nicht ? Hat er mein Eigentum und mich geschützt ?" (*SH*, 72)[189] It is illuminating that she places her property before herself in the syntactical order of this rhetorical question. The loss of her homeland amounts to the near-total dispossession of her former identity; to a greater extent than the other figures in the novel, Line is a relatively one-dimensional character whose defining traits are her Silesian background, her refugee status, and the accompanying disdain for an East German government presumably overeager to extol the benefits of "German-Polish friendship."[190] At the same time, Eggers and Line appear to share a deep, platonic affinity that stems from their itinerancy and their common awareness of the transience of possessions:

> *Sparen ? :* »Schparen isch Wahnschinn« sagte sie durch die Zähne (beim Putzen; dann, aufgerichtet) : »Das heißt doch bloß : Kraft verzetteln für eine Zukunft, die man nie haben wird : zschu offt erlebt.« (wieder nach unten; und wir nickten einander im Dreieck zu : Flüchtlingsweisheit)." (*SH*, 69)[191]

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[189] The vagueness of Line's language in her criticism of an unnamed 'state' may be owing to the fact that the specific state that "should" have protected her and her property would have been the Third Reich. An East German state did not exist until 1949, two years after Line's deportation from Silesia "(am 26. Juli 1947)". (*SH*, 93)

[190] "*Da ! : Eben* wurden aus Polen ‹anläßlich des Besuches einer Bergarbeiter-Delegation spontane Ausbrüche deutsch=polnischer Freundschaft› gemeldet : auch bloß primitiv und unverschämt dieser Ostrundfunk !" (*SH*, 94)

[191] Eggers echoes this bitter worldview in a later aside : "*(‹Lebensbahn›, ‹Lebensreise› ? :* so was Vornehmes gabs früher; heute robbt man bis zu dem Dreckpunkt, wo Einen ‹seine› Granate ‹trifft›. – Seien Sie froh, daß ich Klammern setze, Mensch !)." (*SH*, 86)

But whereas Eggers converts this knowledge into power by taking advantage of the postwar redistribution of territory, Line continues to cling to the hope of regaining her lost possessions. In fact, it is the sole reason that she remains in the German Democratic Republic, where refugees receive far fewer provisions than in the Federal Republic: "*»Nee : Ich muß wieder zurück.«* erklärte sie; und : »Neinnein : falls *überhaupt* Schlesien wieder mal friedlich dazukommen sollte : dann kriegts die Ostzone. Und nich der Westen hier.«" (*SH*, 161) The fact that she refers to the GDR as the "Ostzone," like Eggers, demonstrates her purely practical relationship to her country of residence. As Eggers highlights at various points in the novel, Line is far from having internalized the ideology and the political platform of the Socialist Unity Party to the extent that many of her compatriots have.

Moreover, her remark "falls *überhaupt* Schlesien wieder mal friedlich dazukommen sollte" implicitly suggests an unspoken desire to recapture Silesia by force, a wish that was not uncommon among the resettled inhabitants of the GDR owing in part to their exclusion from the East German political discussion.[192] This resentment is not only directed at the East German authorities, but also at the Poles whom Line depicts in highly stereotypical terms as simultaneously sluggish and swift in their thievery:

> *» ›Matonis‹ : »Faul* waren die Polen : zum Erbrechen !« – Er ‹nahm› sich dann Lachmanns Geschäft in der Jelengorskaja (wie jetzt die Hirschbergerstraße hieß) »eines Tages standen sie (Lachmanns) vor unserer Tür : er ne Kaffeetasse in der Hand, sie ein Kopfkissen unterm Arm. (*SH*, 85)

> *‹Die Polin› :* »ging immer vorm Haus auf und ab : bis ich Angst kriegte, und Matonis rief.« (‹O : Bä-suuch› hatte der fröhlich geschrieen : eine alte Liebe aus Lodz, der er mal die Ehe versprochen gehabt hatte. – Sie schlief neben dem für sie angerichteten Bett auf dem Fußboden. Zog Line die Strümpfe aus, rollte sie slawischflink, und steckte sie in einen Quersack. (*SH*, 86)

[192] Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles*, 342.

The long-standing German stereotype of Poles as lazy or indolent combines here with the equally established stereotype of thieving Poles in a way that underscores the inconsistency and mutual incompatibility of these two clichés.[193] The mere juxtaposition of the neologism *slawischflink* with the generalization of the newly settled Poles as *faul zum Erbrechen* is enough to draw the veracity of Line's account into question. There is no doubt that the vitriolic tone of her recounting of the postwar population transfer stems from her maltreatment at the hands of the new Polish residents and administrators of her hometown. But even Eggers, who himself does not seem particularly sympathetic to the postwar plight of resettled Poles, occasionally distances himself from Line's caustic speech. For instance, at one point, he makes a special indication of the *gröbliche* language that Line utilizes to describe the new Polish inhabitants of Silesia, voicing surprise at her abusive tone. (*SH*, 93) And instead of using the highly politicized and revanchist term *Vertreibung*, which was common parlance in the West,[194] the protagonist employs the term *Ausweisung* to refer to the deportation of Germans from Polish Silesia, a word that was generally perceived as signaling a relinquishment of any territorial claim and an acceptance of the Allied redistribution of territory.[195]

Nevertheless, neither Line nor Eggers seem to recognize the similarities between themselves and the Polish figures described. The lines of identification that crisscross the novel and wear away at the German-German divide appear strangely incapable of overcoming the Oder-

[193] A variation of the stereotype of the 'lazy Pole' can be found in early twentieth century German depictions of *polnische Wirtschaft*, a purportedly Polish-specific predisposition to mismanagement and degeneracy. See Kristin Kopp, *Germany's Wild East*, 85-89.

[194] Resettled Germans represented a considerably robust political force in the Federal Republic during the 1950s and 1960s; indeed, they were politically useful for the Adenauer government in establishing a narrative of German victimhood that was advantageous in diplomatic negotiations. Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles*, 2-3.

[195] Peter Sinram, "Arno Schmidt und die Nähe zu Polen," *Zettelkasten* 25 (2006), 257.

Neisse border.[196] In actuality, the overwhelming majority of Polish citizens who settled Lower Silesia after the war were themselves displaced persons who had been uprooted from their homes in Poland's former eastern borderlands, which had been ceded to the Soviet Union as a consequence of the same Potsdam Agreement that made Silesia part of the Polish People's Republic. Matonis, the surname of the Polish man who moves into Line's home, is of Lithuanian origin, suggesting that he might have been forced to migrate from a territory along the Polish northeastern border ceded to Soviet Lithuania in 1945.[197] If this is the case, his own experience of deportation might explain his sympathy for Line and his intention to help her with her baggage before being admonished by angry bystanders: "*Matonis hätte* ihr erst noch den Weidenkorb zum Lastauto tragen helfen wollen : da wären aber grader andere Polen vom Sportplatz gekommen : »Was ! ? : Du hilfst einer Nimka ! !« – da hätte er sich wie begossen ganz sachte seitwärts […]." (*SH*, 94) Furthermore, Line herself is by no means free of Polish traits. She applies for Polish citizenship since her "Großmutter war ne geborene Ronkowski gewesen" and she even appears to speak a little Polish: "Sie drohte verlegen auf Polnisch, dem Sinne nach etwa, »Keep a good tongue in your head !« […]." (*SH*, 101) Nevertheless, these commonalities do not bring Line and Matonis together or endear them to one another, at least not from Line's perspective. In a novel rife with doppelgänger and duplicates, it is surprising that *Das steinerne Herz* fails to draw attention to the

[196] This absence of identification is particularly surprising because Schmidt elsewhere draws attention to the experiential similarities between Germans and Poles concerning political partitions: "Und nach jeder ‹politischen Umwälzung› noch flossen die Flüchtlingsströme – ob nach dem immer erneuten ‹Teilungen Polens› (wir verstehen das unglückliche Land hoffentlich allmählich besser, seitdem auch die ‹Teilungen Deutschlands› ein geschichtlicher Begriff zu werden beginnen; die erste erfolgte zur Napoleonischen Zeit) [...]." Arno Schmidt, "Flüchtlinge, oh Flüchtlinge !" in *Essays und Aufsätze*, 401.

[197] Most Polish "repatriates" to Lower Silesia were transferred from southeastern localities that became part of Soviet Ukraine, but some were relocated from the northeastern borderlands as well. Hugo Service, *German to Poles*, 146.

shared migration experiences of resettled Germans and Poles in the immediate postwar moment.[198] Whereas the novel uses the German-German demarcation line to develop a conception of the borderland as a liberating space of inversion and satirical impropriety, the Oder-Neisse border appears in an entirely different light, associated as it is with the violence of dispossession and the foreignness of an essentially dissimilar Other.

In keeping with the seemingly unbridgeable gap between the Polish figures portrayed in the secondary storyline and the German characters in the main narrative, the speech of the Polish figures recreated in Line's recounting is not standard Polish. It might be more accurately described as a phonetic transcription similar to the novel's recreation of dialects, or it may even be a combination of various Slavic languages: "Jelengorskaja," which Hirschberger Straße is christened after the Polonization of the Silesian town, is a kind of merger of the Polish *Jeleniogórska* and the Russian *Olenegorskaja*; "Nimka" is nearly the Polish *Niemka*; and "»[w]elika, welika« (also ‹groß›)," by which Matonis designates his future bride, is phonetically closer to the Ukrainian *velyka* or Croatian *velika* than Polish *wielka*. (*SH*, 93) As Josef Huerkamp has demonstrated, Schmidt's knowledge of Polish was limited and occasionally comingled with his more extensive knowledge of Russian, which appears briefly in *Das steinerne Herz* but figures more prominently in the author's subsequent works *Die Gelehrtenrepublik* and *KAFF auch Mare Crisium*.[199] But whereas all of the languages in *KAFF*, including German, are subjected to a relatively uniform phoneticization, resulting in spellings like "Dschentlmänn," "zweischtimmijen Beschreibunk," and "»*Tschemm wy sanimajetjeß ?«*,"[200] the phonetic imitation of Polish in *Das*

[198] The motif of the doppelgänger in *Das steinerne Herz* has already been addressed at length in Schmidt scholarship. For an exemplary analysis of the novel's use of doubling, see Susanne Fischer, "Die Welt ein vergessenes Zimmer. Zum historischen Roman *Das steinerne Herz*," in *Teiche zwischen Nord- und Südmeer*, ed. Bettina Clausen, et al., 77-95 (Bargfeld: Arno Schmidt Stiftung, 1994).
[199] Josef Huerkamp, *Die Große Kartei*, 38.

[200] Arno Schmidt, *KAFF auch Mare Crisium*, in *Bargfelder Ausgabe I*, vol. 3, 20; 45; 242.

*steinerne Herz*, much less its conflation with other Slavic languages, effectively devalues it in the face of the other national languages (i.e., French and English) that are reproduced in accordance with those languages' spelling rules. This apparent disregard for the Polish language and the phoneticization of its vocabulary in conformity with German orthography assumes added meaning in light of the etymology of the words *Słowianin* ("Slav") and *Niemiec* ("German"), which Eggers tags on to the end of Line's tale: "»Aber auch die Deutschen, die schon oben standen, haben nicht *ein*mal mit angefaßt; nicht Einer : ‹Uns hat auch niemand geholfen›.« (‹Nimka› = ‹Njemski› = ‹Stumme Hunde› : die ‹Slawa›, das ‹Wort› nicht haben !)." (*SH*, 94) Here Eggers reveals himself to be in line with linguists who perceive the German word *Slaw* as drawn from the Proto-Slavic term for 'word'—*slovo*, which the mute (*němi*) Germans lacked.[201] Nevertheless, in Line's situation, the German lack of the Slavic "word" not only represents her lack of influence, it implicitly attributes full agency and responsibility to the Slavs in charge of the deportation. The mute Germans can only look on helplessly. Needless to say, this position takes little account of the wartime violence at the hands of German soldiers and civilians that helped lay the groundwork for the harsh campaigns of ethnic cleansing that occurred in the war's aftermath.[202] And considering this German voicelessness in the face of the Polish-enforced deportation, the rendering of Polish speech into German spelling potentially turns into an act of retribution, a symbolic re-seizing of the "word," which will never stand in for the territory.

Despite the lack of explicit identification between the German and Polish figures in the novel, there is a curious parallel between the secondary Silesian storyline and the main narrative

[201] For more on this interpretation, see Adam Mesiarkin, "The Name of the Slavs: Etymology and Meaning," *Studia Slavica et Balcanica Petropolitana*, no. 1 (2017), 3-20.

[202] "Devastating and exploitative occupation regimes were imposed on Poland and nearby states. Localized inter-ethnic conflicts were set off and systematic mass killing – and genocide in the case of Germany – was perpetrated. The effect was that Poles and other Eastern Europeans would have few qualms about implementing brutal population policies of their own once the war was over." Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles*, 14.

that is signaled during Line's recounting of the postwar population transfer: While the refugee tells her story of Silesia's 'relocation' from German to Polish ownership, Eggers prepares his doublet of the second volume of Heinrich Ringklib's statistical handbook of Hanover, which he intends to sneak into the East German state library and swap with the rare third volume from 1859, completing his collection. Eggers' first day in the German Democratic Republic is spent doing reconnaissance at the state library, where he closely inspects the coveted third volume and makes meticulously detailed notes regarding the appearance of its cover and binding:

> *Die goldenen Zahlen ‹1859› ? :* Ein Stückchen Goldtusche hatte ich ja im Kasten (bei Line natürlich; nicht hier !). Hoffentlich färbte und hielt die ausreichend. Sonst müßte ich sie eben aus Goldpapier ausschneiden und aufkleben : ich vermaaß Größe und Schnitt dieser Ziffern, die 8 stand schief, plauderhaft den Kopf zur 5, über die zirkelrunde Schulter. (Dann noch die goldenen Querstriche über den Bündchen). […]
> *Nochmal der Deckel;* nochmal die Farbe vergleichen : ja, doch wohl ! Ich notierte mir die Abnützungsflecken nach Koordinaten, x und y (wobei links unten der Nullpunkt saß : die muß ich dann auf meinem auch abreiben. Die Form des größten Flecks zeichnete ich mir auf ein Stückchen Pergamentpapier durch : hoffentlich krieg ich nachher bei irgendeinem Buchbinder das entsprechende Bezugspaper ! Und Vorsatzblätter auch !). (*SH*, 77)

The similarities between this thorough inspection of the book's exterior and the surveying work described previously in this chapter are readily apparent. The word *vermaaß* seems inappropriate within the context of such small-scale measurement and the mapping of marks of wear onto a coordinate grid reminds the reader that the protagonist does not employ tusche or India ink solely for the replication of numbers on book covers—in Ahlden, Eggers uses tusche to add a new construction to his outdated cadastral map:

> *Aber hier ? ! : Der Neubau ? ? ! ! :* der war doch tatsächlich auf meiner Katasterkarte nicht eingezeichnet ! (Sonst stimmte sie allerdings wunderbar !). Und ich schlenderte gekonnt auf und ab und auf und ab, froh des entdeckten Fehlers; lugte auch scharf mit der Strichteilung im Auge – die Längsachse des Schuppens hinten also senkrecht zur Straße : so ! – und zeichnete Alles hübsch ein. (Neben das amtliche Symbol des Laubbaums : so ! – Zuhause dann noch fein mit Tusche nachziehen)." (*SH*, 48)

The detail of the *Strichteilung im Auge*, which arguably already appears on the novel's first page in the form of the *Visierei*, indicates that Eggers has internalized the optics of the surveyor's theodolite.[203] It therefore comes as no surprise that the protagonist would treat the exterior of a book like a territory and pinpoint its most noteworthy features by way of methods analogous to land surveying.

This correlation between books and territories, however, gains new significance in the midst of Line's recounting, which is interspersed with descriptions of Eggers' fastidious endeavor to make his doublet resemble the prized volume in the state library: "*(Sie stopfte* mühsam an Strümpfen und geflickten Nachtkittelchen; ich klebte und fälschte lustig und gelehrt. Also immer durcheinander) : […]." (*SH*, 84) *Durcheinander* could be an adverb referring to Eggers' forging and pasting, but this meaning seems unlikely in view of the protagonist's punctiliousness. Instead, *durcheinander* more likely modifies the following scene in the manner of a stage direction, which would explain the subsequent colon indicating to the reader the shift from the primary diegetic level, the narrating instance in Line's shanty, to the level of the deportation narrative. These two hints help the reader make sense of some of the following *Erlebniseinheiten* where the two diegetic levels seamlessly intermingle in a manner akin to the multiple interwoven narratives of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*:

> *»Die deutschen Soldaten haben gehaust ! :* manchmal dachte man, der Russe wär schon da !« (alle Schranktüren aufgesprengt; Alles gefressen und eingesteckt; Alle mit Stiefeln im Bett gelegen. Immer mit dem Handballen über das neu aufgeklebte Bezugspapier fahren. Dann zwischen 2 Brettchen mit den Schraubzwingen pressen : die laß ich dann auch hier !). (*SH*, 84)

[203] Josef Huerkamp notes that *Strichteilungen* appear both in land surveying equipment as well as in the scopes of long-range weapons. Josef Huerkamp, *Die Große Kartei*, 13.

The opening statement in quotations, presumably spoken by Line, merges into Eggers' own rendition of her story, which is distinctly set off by parentheses. The closing quotation marks and the open parenthesis unambiguously signal a transition from one figure's speech to another, but the diegetic level does not appear to have changed. The actions described by Eggers in the form of past participles are to be attributed to the German soldiers ransacking Line's Silesian home, though a definite subject is missing from these clauses. The switch from the narrative to the narrating instance is marked inconspicuously by a period, but the following two sentences depicting Eggers' handiwork retain the structure of the preceding clauses; they merely trade out the past participles for infinitives, which naturally also serve to communicate the diegetic shift. The effect of this curiously unobtrusive changeover is that the pillaging carried out by the retreating German soldiers bleeds into Eggers' elaborate counterfeiting and vice-versa, leading the reader to ponder the affinities between these two activities. And this connection is not only established by way of adjacency; Eggers' pressing of the bar clamp between two boards visually resembles the soldiers' violent act of bursting open the closet doors in Line's home. In this way, Eggers unwittingly places himself in a parallel position as the perpetrators and the intricate theft of Ringklib's statistical handbook becomes analogous to Silesia's piecemeal appropriation, first by the German and Russian military, then by the new Polish People's Republic.

As suggested, this correlation does not remain limited to the German intruders, but extends to the Poles as well:

> *»Wie oft kam Einer rein :* machte alle Schränke auf; zog sich die Schuhe aus.
>
> Alles von uns an« (Ging ab damit : Alles neu macht der Mai. – Ich faltete mir sorgfältig das Packpapier vor, und leimte die vorbereitete maschinengeschriebene Adresse drauf, ‹Herrn W. Eggers, Ahlden / Bei K. Thumann›. Maß den Bindfaden ab, und schürzte oben die Laufschlinge. Wellpappe passend schneiden; eine Tube war schon leer).
>
> *Das ‹Häuser wählen› der Polen :* was ihnen gefiel, nahmen sie. […] (Opa starb

> dann in der Nacht vom 29. zum 30. Juli : »Den Sarg hat der Lange=Tischler noch mit getragen«; durch Gryfogóra, wie's jetzt schon hieß.) (*SH*, 84-5.)

Once again, the pillaging of wardrobes and "selection of houses" parallel Eggers' forgery of the third volume, which will culminate in his discrete swapping of the counterfeit item for the original in the library the following day. Moreover, his mailing address on the packing paper not only reminds the reader that Eggers has availed himself of Karl and Frieda's home in a similar manner as the Poles presumably "picked" their houses in postwar Silesia The inscription of his name and address onto Ringklib's statistical handbook, which used to be or rather will have been the property of the East German state library, also corresponds to the Polish renaming of Greiffenberg to "Gryfogóra." Line experiences the 're-Polonization' of her Silesian home not only in the slow but steady deportation of Germans and their subsequent replacement by Poles, but also in the alteration of streets and place names into Polish translations. This process of re-naming amounts to a cultural cleansing of the territory of all public manifestations of the German language and its replacement by a kind of Polish signature, placing the territory squarely under Polish possession and within the confines of the PRL.[204] It is therefore no surprise that when Line continues her story the following day, after Eggers has swapped his forgery for the original and shipped it to Ahlden in his pre-addressed packaging, the protagonist ponders its westward voyage after Line describes her resignation to Silesia's eastward shift: "»Ich hatte sogar n Antrag auf polnische Staatsangehörigkeit gestellt : meine Großmutter war ne geborene Ronkowski gewesen, und da war ja vielleicht die Möglichkeit –«. (*14 Uhr 50 : Ringklib* schwebte jetzt über Braunschweig […])" (*SH*, 93) By this point in both narratives, the loot has already been signed, sealed, and shipped off.

[204] "Local Germans apparently abandoned all hope that Germany would keep hold of these territories when 'all local place names began to be Polonized at the start of July [1945], displaying their membership in the Polish state on every road sign'." Hugo Service, *Germans to Poles*, 277.

Line's narrative of the postwar ethnic cleansing of Silesia is interspersed throughout with suggestive similarities to Eggers' forgery and theft of Ringklib's statistical handbook; to list them all here would merely belabor the point. But what does the drawing of this parallel actually achieve, particularly in consideration of the novel's many-sided treatment of borders? Is it simply an elaborate manner of labelling the Polish People's Republic's postwar acquisition of Silesia an act of territorial burglary? This interpretation would be in keeping with Line's characterization of the population transfer, but it seems at odds with the numerous other comments on Silesia that appear in Schmidt's other works. In the passage cited above from "Hände weg vom Lexikon !", the author remarks on a kind of terminological or positional relativism of place allowing for cities and towns (especially in historical borderlands like Silesia) to meander endlessly between different states over time, sometimes existing in a region of territorial ambiguity that provides for geopolitical oscillation, contingent on perspective. A similar implication can be found in one of Schmidt's short stories entitled "Rollende Nacht," written shortly after *Das steinerne Herz*, in which a provocative narrator not unlike Eggers confronts an elderly refugee on a train:

> Und die Dame war aus dem Osten; hatte an der Oder ein Häuschen besessen (wie die meisten Flüchtlinge; ganz selten hört man von Einem, daß er zur Miete gewohnt habe); und erzählte länger von Schlesien und seinem uralt=deutschen Boden, als ihr nach den ungeschriebenen Gesetzen einer Schnellzugnacht zukam. Also unterbrach ich sie, als sie zum zweitenmal den ‹Breslauer Ring› beschreiben wollte, mit der Frage nach der Provenienz dieses Wortes. »Nu, Ring, Ring« sagte sie ungnädig, und zeichnete einen mit dem Finger vor ihre seidengrau überspannte Brust : »Der Platz eben; ums Rathaus rum.« »So viel ich weiß, kommt das aber vom polnischen ‹Rynek›« wandte ich verbindlich ein : »das heißt nämlich ‹Markt›«. Sie setzte die Zähne aufeinander und atmete schwer aus; es klang wie »Du Kabire«. »Selbst wenn – was ich bezweifle – es so sein s o l l t e« sagte sie giftig : »wäre es bei der augenblicklichen politischen Lage völlig unangebracht, das zu wissen.« »Sehr richtig!« versetzte prompt ein so furchtbarer Baß, daß ich vorsichtshalber die Abteiltür ein Stückchen aufschob.[205]

[205] Arno Schmidt, "Rollende Nacht," in *Kleinere Erzählungen*, 121.

This seemingly innocent dispute over etymology clearly carries high stakes. The provenance of a word, like a place name, becomes proof of ownership. And unlike in *Das steinerne Herz*, the reader discerns here the wider public importance of the West German claim to Silesia, indicated by the old lady's rebuke and the booming approval of an unidentified fellow passenger. In point of fact, the woman is right to dispute the narrator's allegation: Polish *rynek* is derived from the German *Ring*. But this detail matters little to the narrator, who is likely aware of it; indeed, he seems to be rather knowledgeable when it comes to etymology, as indicated by a later observation concerning the derivation of the word *Rubel*: "‹Dollar› ist ja noch zahm; das kommt von ‹Taler›. Aber ‹Rubel› ? : der erste wurde von einer runden Silberstange mit dem Beil abgehauen; denn ‹rubjit› heißt abhacken [...]."[206] In contrast to this entirely accurate internal monologue, the narrator's misleading etymology lesson arises in response to the resentful woman's assertion that Silesia's soil is "uralt=deutsch." Crucially, the artificial derivation of *Ring* from *rynek* does not amount to a Polish counterclaim to the territory, but rather upends any claim to possession that is cloaked in a language of origins. As Peter Sinram suggests in his analysis of this scene, the protagonist's statement is better characterized as word play than a true etymological tracing of provenance.[207] The hierarchical stratification of words entailed by etymological derivations is leveled by the equalizing effects of word play. Moreover, the search for roots is rendered irrelevant, as the speaking subject effectively becomes the point of origin. This principle also explains the narrator's subsequent adoption of the profession of Slavist attributed to him by a fellow passenger: "»Sie sind Slawist ? – Ä=Studienratdoktor Zeller mein Name : Englisch, Französisch.« Um nachher wenigstens einen Verbündeten drinnen zu haben, erhöhte ich mich feige selbst, graduierte und

[206] Ibid., 120.

[207] Peter Sinram, "Arno Schmidt und die Nähe zu Polen," 262.

nobilitierte : »Doktor von Ende.«"[208] At no previous point in the short narrative has the nameless narrator indicated his actual profession or provided any background information. Indeed, there is no originary identity to conflict with this playful fabrication. The mask effectively becomes the man.

Returning to *Das steinerne Herz*, this consideration of origins and originals not only relates to the postwar transformation of Silesian place and street names, which in the novel predominantly consist of translations of earlier German names. It is also closely related to the novel's major themes of forgery and exchange, which manifest themselves most explicitly in Eggers' theft of the statistical handbook but also underlie the novel's central couple-switch (a parody of Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*) and the persistent question of Eggers' own identity.[209] In light of Eggers' compulsive collecting habits,[210] one might assume that he attributes great value to originals, which tend to be fetishized for their scarcity, inaccessibility, and their auratic proximity to the original creator. And indeed, he does express excitement at the prospect of viewing an original version of an eighteenth-century topographical map of Hanover.[211] But a later comment at the East German state library suggests that this enthusiasm for the original may stem from the inaccuracy of subsequent reproductions of the map:

> *»Haben Sie das Original* der großen Topographischen Landesaufnahme des Kurfürstentums Hannover noch ? : Das, nach dem damals der Lichtdruck 1 zu 40.000 gemacht worden ist ? - - - : Tatsächlich ? ! - - - Na ja also : verdienstvoll

[208] Arno Schmidt, "Rollende Nacht," 122

[209] Friedhelm Rathjen's eye-opening analysis of Schmidt's political employment of these themes in his novel unfortunately leaves out Line's narrative of ethnic cleansing. Friedhelm Rathjen, "Original and Fälschung. Ein vergessenes Thema in Arno Schmidt Roman *Das Steinerne Herz,*" *Zettelkasten* 15 (1996), 103-117. For more on the romantic storyline and its relationship to the novel's political dimension, see Johanna M. Gelberg, *Poetik und Politik der Grenze*, 144-145; 151-153.

[210] "Was werde ich mal in der Hölle sammeln ? : vielleicht Hufabdrücke der Teufel." (*SH*, 41)

[211] "(Ein Original der großen Topographischen Karte des Kurfürstentums Hannover, 1764-86, in 165 Blättern ! ! !)." (*SH*, 32)

> gewiß, ja : aber es sind viele unangenehme – und durchaus vermeidbare ! – Fehler bei der Bearbeitung begangen worden.« (*SH*, 78)

In a similar manner, the main objects of his enterprising pursuits, namely Ringklib's statistical handbook and Jansen's unpublished writings, appear to derive their value more from practical utility than from an aura of originality or from a mere desire to possess them, as his later justification of the theft indicates:

> *»Hassdu da eigentlich gar kein' Skrupel bei ?«* (betraf Ringklib; ich sah [Karl] nur mitleidig an) : »Liebster Karl : das Buch ist – laut Leihkarte – am 14. August 1912 zum letzten Male ausgeliehen worden : Und ich brauche es fast *täglich !*« (Später mindestens wöchentlich : also ! – Und rege dadurch das Studium Hannovers mehr an, trage durch seine Erwähnung mehr zu seinem Gedächtnis bei, als wenn die Sache dort still versauern : *also ! !)*. (*SH*, 104)

In contradistinction to a conception of the collector as one who "removes the mobile commodity things from circulation, not for the purpose of using them, but simply to possess them," Eggers wishes to resurrect the information contained in a book long since removed from circulation; possession merely provides the occasion for use.[212] In this regard, he seems surprisingly immune to the allure of originals, an observation that is supported by his later pawning of an accidentally unearthed trove of historical coins so rare that numismatists are likely unaware of them.

And like the narrator from "Rollende Nacht," Eggers' actual background and profession remain shrouded in mystery for the novel's entirety. The reader is given hints as to some of the narrator's prior experiences—for instance, he appears to have been a war prisoner in Brussels[213]—and former places of residence. But these fragmentary components are never brought together to

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[212] Christoph Asendorf, *Batteries of Life: On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity*, trans. Don Reneau (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993), 51.

[213] "*Kriegsgefangener in Irland* war [Karl] gewesen, und konnte ‹Scheiße› auf Keltisch sagen. Ich in Brüssel; und vergalt sein Vertrauen." (*SH*, 17) Most of the biographical tidbits attributed to Eggers are drawn from Schmidt's own biography. But to simply explain away the mysterious gaps in Eggers' backstory by aligning it with Schmidt's would be to move beyond the text into the realm of the author's personal life, which would have been unknown to the majority of Schmidt's contemporaries.

constitute a cohesive backstory that might consolidate a distinct sense of identity. Moreover, it is often uncertain which of these elements can be trusted. Eggers' chameleon-like identity is continually adjusted in accordance with his environment and the demands of the moment. In effect, he himself is an object of interminable forgery, as indicated at numerous points in the novel:

> Aber jetzt auch [Karls] Vertrauen vergelten – verflucht – : was war ich gleich von Beruf? – – : »Ich bin Einkäufer«. (Geschickt, was ? ! Wird keine Sau draus schlau; aber er warf pfiffig den Kopf auf, als wüßte er nun Alles). (*SH*, 13)

> [Frieda] blieb hart; und ich versuchte es, [Karl] amüsiert, ihr anerkennend, zuzulächeln. (N Januskopf müßte man haben). (*SH*, 17)

> *»Wo wohnstú nu eigentlich genau ? !«* (Das geht Euch gar nischt an !). Ich atmete unhörbar und sagte : »‹Hermeskeil› : im Hunsrück.« (ich hatte mir einen uralten Personalausweis dahin umradiert; Wohnort und Straße geändert : allgemeine Richtung genügt. Den zeigte ich ihm wieder : »Nummer 43«.)
> *»Und Dein Geld ? !«* (War von ner Tante geerbt : »Zwölftausend hatte sie mir damals vermacht. *Und* freie Einzimmerwohnung in ihrem Gutshof. – : Och nee : war durchaus noch braun=rosig mit ihren Anfang 50.« Er kicherte anerkennend : »Die war ma dankbar, was ? !«). (*SH*, 60)

This final citation is particularly enlightening with respect to Eggers' retroactive construction of an originary identity. The reader is, of course, aware that the narrator's current residence is not in the Hunsrück, and Eggers' parenthetical description of his tampering of an *uralten* ID card, which resembles the "Rollende Nacht" narrator's etymological tinkering with the elderly refugee's *uralt=deutschen Boden*, leaves no doubt as to the insincerity of his stated address. Interestingly, Eggers' use of the adverb *dahin*, as opposed to *dahingehend*, suggests a spatial metaphor that likens this forgery to the postwar alteration of Silesian place names: his artful erasure moves his putative residence to Hermeskeil, just like the renaming of Greiffenberg to Gryfogóra effectively shifts this formerly German city eastward into the Polish People's Republic. However, the second paragraph of this last passage confronts the reader with uncertainty, as Eggers has not yet

revealed—not even in his interior monologue—the source of his considerable financial resources. The parenthetical here does not constitute a reliable aside removed from Eggers' generally dishonest exterior as it also contains his explanation to Karl, toward whom he has been consistently deceptive until this point in the novel. With no alternative explanations to guide them, the reader is left to accept this potentially false information as an authentic original, or else forgo the consideration of origins altogether.

In his illuminating treatment of the theme of forgery in *Das steinerne Herz*, Friedhelm Rathjen points out that, in a work in which so many objects, addresses, traits, and other properties or possessions have been exchanged, as demonstrated above, the distinction between a forgery and an original becomes almost impossible to make out: "[I]n einer sei es Fiktion, sei es Welt der fortgesetzten Fälschung und Substitution ist schlechthin alles nur noch Surrogat, nur noch Ersatz für ein Eigentliches, ein Echtes, das sich längst verabschiedet hat."[214] And indeed, Eggers himself perfectly demonstrates this point during his forgery of the statistical handbook: "*Ein Klecks* auf die Jahreszahl des Vorworts : so, nun konnte in hundert Jahren der nächste Interessent kommen, und nachweisen, daß die 3. Auflage des Ringklib ein bloßer unveränderter Abdruck der 2. sei." (*SH*, 85) The translation takes advantage of the modal ambiguity of the English "could" and renders the second clause, "so, now the next interested party could come along in a hundred years," but the German uses the unambiguous preterite form *konnte* ("was able to"), which makes little sense within the context of the sentence. However, there is the distinct possibility that this seeming error constitutes a wink or intimation to the reader, one that transcends the semantics of this individual sentence. Who is to say that Eggers himself was not the "next interested party" who, in the anticipation of finding an original, came across a forgery? And in light of the entanglement of

[214] Friedhelm Rathjen, "Original und Fälschung," 116.

Line's ethnic cleansing narrative with Eggers' heist storyline, the implication of this interpretation for the postwar Polish appropriation of Silesia should be clear. To dub the redrawing of the German-Polish border an instance of territorial theft is to the attribute the right of ownership to one side over the other, an argument that relies on the determination of that territory's origins. But as Schmidt's narrative indicates, this act of determination is nothing more than a mere positing, a *Setzung* that, like the border itself, attempts to order the continual shuffling of objects, territories, and possessions under different owners.

An alternative to this conception of rightful possession founded on primacy and origins is provided by the novel's romantic narrative. In the novel's third and final chapter, Eggers spontaneously cobbles together a practical philosophy of relationships that upends traditional conceptions of romantic love and marriage, which would have been associated with the Adenauer era's reactionary cultural restoration.

> *Vielleicht* war unserer der richtige Weg ? : daß man im Laufe des Lebens körperlich und geistig mit 2 oder 3 Individuen des anderen Geschlechtes verschmelzen muß; [...]
> *Also müßte* zumindest die ‹Erste Ehe› durchaus auf Probe sein : 5 Jahres engstes Zusammenleben, aber von Staatswegen dafür gesorgt, daß keine Kinder das Verhältnis ächzend verewigen können. Nach 5 Jahren dann mag sich jeder prüfen, und entscheiden, ob es weiter gehen soll. Oder ob er einen zweiten Versuch machen will : dieses zweite Mal würde die Wahl – theoretisch, zugegeben – unterstützt durch die Erfahrungen des ersten Falles – vermutlich schon weit befriedigender ausfallen; vorsichtiger vorgenommen werden. Die Frau wüßte jetzt von sich selbst : ob sie einen ‹heißen› Mann braucht; ob sie in ihrer Freizeit geistig arbeiten möchte (und könnte) : dann dürfte sie nämlich nur einen Intellektuellen wählen. (*SH*, 154-5)

Of course, this alternative comes with its own unquestionably conservative features, such as the heteronormativity found in the first *Erlebniseinheit* and the sexist final sentence that, among other things, suggests that a woman's sole means of intellectual engagement is through her husband, and only in her free time. In order to perceive the critical gender commentary contained in the novel's

romantic narrative, which Jan Uelzmann has rightly highlighted, it must be understood within the context of the Catholic-inflected traditionalism of 1950's West Germany.[215] Crucial for the present purposes, however, is the passage's implied critique of primacy ("die ‹erste Ehe› durchaus auf Probe sein") and the transformation of an institution conventionally construed as a kind of abiding demarcation of possession into a practical relation that is by no means permanent and that can arguably only be strengthened by the ongoing exchange of romantic partners. In contradistinction to the deportation plot, the novel's romantic storyline thereby offers a narrative that is not backward-facing and founded upon loss or mourning, but rather forward-facing and productive, allowing for a virtual infinitude of different romantic affiliations that do not "call fools into a circle" in the manner of ideological or religious dogma. In consideration of the novel's multifaceted examination of different kinds of borders, the protagonist's occasional musings on relationships, such as the one cited above, and the Goethean couple-swap testify to a notion of boundaries and demarcation considerably more fluid than the rigid system borders of the Cold War era.

## VII. Conclusion: *Die Nachkriegsordnung eggen*

Eggers' proposed reconfiguration of the institution of marriage provides a new perspective on the scene that opened this chapter, the *Rede auf der Zonengrenze* in which the protagonist urinates onto the demarcation line between the two German states. As suggested previously, this act constitutes an imitation of the abstract political-geographical partition that became increasingly concrete in the years following World War II, and the protagonist's gesture does allow him to be perceived as a successor of the two political blocs that have divided Europe in an attempt to secure

[215] Jan Uelzmann, "Consumption and Consummation: Domestic Tales of the Economic Miracle in Arno Schmidt's *Das steinerne Herz,*" *The German Quarterly* 86, no. 2 (2013), 180-1

their respective spheres of influence. Nevertheless, particularly in consideration of the novel's nullification of rightful claims of ownership, one can assume that the symbolic demarcation Eggers makes in this scene is of a fundamentally different nature than that of the postwar political powers. Indeed, this deed not only represents the protagonist's confiscation of the *Statistisches Handbuch* with all its cartographic resonances, but also the operation of writing itself, which constitutes its own mapping of an imaginative geography distinct from and potentially at odds with the political-geographical status quo. And the boundaries of this imaginative geography are more porous and impermanent and considerably less systematic and rigid than those of Cold War political geography; the inconsistent and, at times, contradictory presentation of the novel's borders alone—as thresholds, zones, borderlands, and borderlines—demonstrates the degree to which Schmidt's text strays from the conceptual regimentation of early Cold War ideologies. In fact, the satirical undercutting of these regimes manifests yet another aspect of Eggers' identity, one that is not communicated by his backstory, which is subject to counterfeiting, but rather by his name. *Eggers* comes from the word *Egge* or harrow. As an agricultural tool, the harrow is used to loosen the soil and remove weeds in order to prepare for planting. In light of this association, one can perceive Eggers' equal-handed critique of both sides of the German-German demarcation line as a weeding of a discursive field that has been overgrown by uncompromising political dogmas and religious beliefs detrimental to growth.

Still, Schmidt's alternative geography is bounded on its eastern flank. The lines of identification stop at the Oder-Neisse border, abandoning the Poles to a fate and experience presumably unknowable to the German characters with which they secretly have much in common. In order to overcome the limits of Schmidt's literary cartography, the following chapter will turn

to the travelogues of Zbigniew Herbert, whose network of intellectual and affective affiliations not only spans beyond the European continent but stretches back into prehistory.

## CHAPTER THREE

## Cold War Europe as a Borderland

## Zbigniew Herbert's *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*

### I. A Dialogue between East and West

Arno Schmidt's depiction of the expulsion of Line and her German compatriots from the new Polish territory of Silesia neglects the background of the newly arrived Poles. Their settlement of the erstwhile German land and their appropriation of formerly German property is presented more as an inversion of the takeover of the eastern marchlands described in works like *Soll und Haben* and *Das schlafende Heer* than as a slow and begrudging occupation of alien territory by recent exiles from the eastern Polish borderlands. The latter, however, would have offered a more accurate representation of the postwar population transfers into and out of Poland, particularly from the Polish perspective, an experience with which Schmidt was likely unfamiliar. The same cannot be said of the Polish author whose work will be the focal point of the present chapter. Like Schmidt and Johnson, Zbigniew Herbert was born in a city that would belong to a different state after World War II, in accordance with the diplomatic agreements reached at Yalta: Lwów (German *Lemberg*), the third largest city in the Second Polish Republic from 1918 to 1939, was formally incorporated into the Soviet Union in February of 1946. Initially occupied by the Soviets in late September of 1939, it twice changed hands between the Germans and the Soviets over the course of the war. Thus, inhabitants of the city could claim to have earlier and more thorough knowledge of Soviet strategies of oppression than their Western Polish counterparts. Herbert remained in Lwów through the German takeover of the city in 1941 and the subsequent occupation, but he left for Kraków in March of 1944 in anticipation of the oncoming Red Army. Kraków would

serve only as a brief place of residence for the young poet, as the continuation of his legal studies would take him to Toruń in 1949, and later to Warsaw.

Though he was not forced to resettle, the westward shift of Poland's eastern borders and the accompanying population transfers effectively separated him from the city of his youth. Formerly the capital and largest city in the Habsburg crownland of Galicia and Lodomeria, the fifth-largest city in the Habsburg Empire after Vienna, Budapest, Prague, and Trieste,[216] interwar Lwów possessed an ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity not uncommon to the eastern holdings of the Second Polish Republic. As a result of the wartime and postwar ethnic cleansings, however, the city had been for the most part reduced to its Ukrainian population. The Lwów to which Herbert would return, were he to undertake this journey, would likely bear few resemblances to his hometown. It is an encounter that the author imagines in a poem written in the 1970s:

> Were I to return there
> I would surely find
> not a single shadow of my home
> nor the trees of childhood
> nor a cross with an iron plaque
> no bench where I whispered entreaties
> chestnuts and blood
> nor any other thing that is ours[217] (*WZ*, 374)

The first stanza of this poem, entitled *Pan Cogito myśli o powrocie do rodzinnego miasta* (Mr. Cogito thinks about returning to his hometown) and published in the poet's 1974 collection *Pan Cogito* (Mr. Cogito), notably stages the return of the speaker to his childhood home in the subjunctive mood. It is a hypothetical journey. But despite the conjectural status of the return, the speaker is certain that nothing of his youth would remain in his hometown. Of course, the speaker

[216] Lutz C. Kleveman, *Lemberg: Die vergessene Mitte Europas* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2017), 22.

[217] "Gdybym tam wrócił/ pewnie bym nie zastał/ ani jednego cienia domu mego/ ani drzew dzieciństwa/ ani krzyża z żelazną tabliczką/ ławki na której szeptałem zaklęcia/ kasztany i krew/ ani też żadnej rzeczy która nasza jest[.]"

is not Herbert himself, but rather his semi-autobiographical persona Mr. Cogito, a poetic creation that grants the author a degree of ironic distance from his own biography. Furthermore, there are no details identifying the city in question as Lwów, and the ethnic makeup of the population goes unmentioned. What is communicated, however, is the experience of a profound loss, a disconnection from the comfort and security of childhood, expressed here in the shade (*cienia*) of the family home and the "trees of childhood."

To make matters worse, there is not even an indication of the prior existence of this childhood home, a memorial in the style of a "cross with an iron plaque" that might allow the speaker to mourn and commemorate his loss and thereby proceed unhindered into the future. It is perhaps this entrapment between past and present, between youth and adulthood that explains the speaker's subsequent self-description in a frozen posture:

> all that was saved
> was a stone slab
> with a chalk circle
> I stand in the middle
> on one leg
> momentarily before the leap
>
> I cannot grow
> though years pass
> and above me boom
> planets and wars
>
> I stand in the middle
> immobile as a statue
> on one leg
> before the leap into finitude[218] (*WZ*, 374)

[218] "[W]szystko co ocalało/ to płyta kamienna/ z kredowym kołem/ stoję w środku/ na jednej nodze/ na moment przed skokiem// nie mogę urosnąć/ choć mijają lata/ a w górze huczą/ planety i wojny// stoję w środku/ nieruchomy jak pomnik/ na jednej nodze/ przed skokiem w ostateczność[.]"

The word *ocalało* ("saved") is a particularly resonant one in Polish postwar poetry; it appears both in the title of Czesław Miłosz's first postwar poetry collection *Ocalenie* (Rescue), in which the future Nobel Laureate asserts the redemptive role of poetry, and in Tadeusz Różewicz's famous poem *Ocalony* (The survivor), in which Herbert and Miłosz's contemporary nihilistically describes the urgent, though likely futile, artistic search for meaning and order after the material and symbolic destruction wrought by the Second World War. Herbert shares Różewicz's cynicism, but it would be wrong to call him a nihilist. Indeed, the "saved" slab becomes the stable base for the poet's one-legged pose; his artfully and likely precariously balanced body becomes a kind of memorial (*pomnik*) in the absence of other monuments. In comparison to Miłosz and Różewicz's programmatic statements, Herbert's poem and its suggestive description of the central poetic figure insinuates a poetic project that is both forward and backward facing, memorializing a place and culture that no longer exists while looking into a future that is not yet definite.

It is a Hamlet-like pause of intensive deliberation and reflection before the moment of decision, the instant where words and thoughts are transformed into action. The latter is described by Herbert in his poem *Tren Fortynbrasa* (Elegy of Fortinbras) as the execution of an "eye-catching thrust" (*efektowny sztych*), a feat less arduous than the "eternal vigil" (*wiecznego czuwania*) that must be held by the prince's successor. (*WZ*, 272) Rather than privilege the fifth act of the Shakespearean tragedy, in which Hamlet snaps into action and the tragedy accelerates toward its climax, Herbert appears more interested in the play's second and fourth acts, which serve as "pause[s] for breath" (*aktami wytchnienia*) as he writes in his 1952 essay *Hamlet na granicy milczenia* (Hamlet on the border of silence). (*MD*, 8) Like Mr. Cogito's one-legged pose in the center of the stone slab, the more expansive, reflective moments in *Hamlet*, such as the protagonist's famous monologues, stage an intensive intellectual engagement with a seemingly

insoluble conflict, an activity that Herbert distinguishes sharply from the passive and purportedly weak state of indecision occasionally imputed to the prince:

> Before Descartes risked his universal doubt, before he began demolishing the foundations, he built himself a cozy little temporary morality not only to avoid hesitating to act when his reason obliged him to be hesitant to judge, but also to live as happily as he could in the midst of those intellectual storms. The Prince of Denmark does not seek any protection. The current of his doubt is religious, metaphysical, moral, not merely methodological. We meet Hamlet in a negative, skeptical phase. In this phase, definitions and theses are not important. There are situations in which a man should be able to do without a philosophy. These are experiences in the face of which one must discard systems of gentle persuasion and plausible consolations.[219] (*CP*, 579)

The loss of the childhood home in the above-cited poem, which results in Mr. Cogito's suspension between remembrance and growth, is paralleled here by Hamlet's lack of a "cozy little house" (*wygodny domek*) of morality that might lighten the burden of his prolonged and pained ethical deliberations. Hamlet's strength is thus located precisely in his ability to waver, the very trait for which he had been criticized by generations of critics and scholars. Herbert turns this criticism on its head and valorizes the prince's nearly unceasing skepticism and ironic play with philosophical systems. With respect to Herbert's own line of thinking, it is no coincidence that his meditation on Hamlet's virtues is written in the style of an essay, rather than as a verse or prose poem, both forms for which he is perhaps more well known.[220] As a mode of writing, the essay is opposed to the intellectual rigor of philosophical or academic writing; following in the footsteps of Michel de Montaigne, one of Herbert's major influences, the essay stages the development of the author's

[219] "Kartezjusz, zanim zaryzykował wątpienie o wszystkim, zanim burzyć do fundamentów, zbudował sobie wygodny domek tymczasowej moralności nie tylko po to, aby nie być chwiejnym w czynach, gdy rozum zmusza do chwiejności w sądach, ale aby żyć najszczęśliwiej, jak zdoła, w czasie tych intelektualnych burz. Książę duński nie szuka żadnego schronienia. Nurt jego wątpienia jest religijny, metafizyczny, moralny, a nie tylko metodologiczny. Poznajemy Hamleta w fazie negatywnej, sceptycznej. Dla tej fazy nie są ważne sformułowania i tezy. Są sytuacje, w których człowieka powinno stać na to, aby nie mieć filozofii. Są doświadczenia, w obliczu których trzeba odrzucić systemy łagodnych perswazji i przekonywających pocieszań." (*MD*, 13)

[220] According to Herbert, *Hamlet na granicy milczenia*, composed in July of 1952, was his first attempt at the "difficult genre" of the essay. (*MD*, 185)

thoughts in a meandering manner, representing as it does an attempt (French *essai*) to consider all of the often contradictory aspects of a subject rather than reduce that topic to a simple, one-sided definition.[221] By the same token, however, it also holds itself to a relatively strict standard of rationality and distances itself from the imaginative lyricism of poetry. The essay thus strikes a similar pose as both Hamlet and Mr. Cogito, lingering as it does on the border between poetic and scientific discourses.

Herbert's essayistic writings, more specifically his travelogues, will be at the focal point of the following chapter, though his poetry will occasionally be drawn on for elucidation of the concepts developed in his essays. Central to the analysis will be his 1962 collection *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* (Barbarian in the garden), which consists of ten "sketches" (*szkice*) that use the framework of the author's travels through Italy and Southern France to provide art-historical commentary on Renaissance painting and Gothic architecture, among other periods and art forms, as well as in-depth chronicles of the violent suppression of the allegedly heretical Cathars and the Knights Templar at the hands of the medieval Catholic Church. As opposed to the travel fictions of Johnson and Schmidt, this travelogue has no explicit connection to the recently established division of Europe into Eastern and Western spheres of influence. The trips themselves are limited to Western European destinations and the artists, art objects, and historical figures discussed span from antiquity to the early modern period. Nevertheless, the contemporary political situation in Poland and Europe in general constitutes the backdrop for Herbert's art-historical excurses, frequently moving into the foreground whenever the author feels compelled to offer an illuminating comparison between historical events and his own contemporary moment. For the

[221] Bożena Shallcross has referred to this aspect of Herbert's essayistic writing as a manifestation of a larger *esprit de contradiction* that can be identified in his poetry as well. Bożena Shallcross, *Through the Poet's Eye. The Travels of Zagajewski, Herbert, and Brodsky* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2002), 59.

most part, these analogies are presented as a means of clarifying temporally and culturally distant phenomena by reference to circumstances more familiar to the reader. However, and as will be demonstrated in the following, these occasional references to the present establish an analogical mode of reading that allow Herbert's seemingly innocuous descriptions of medieval and early modern Europe to be interpreted as critical commentaries on the Cold War. For instance, the violent interrogation techniques employed by the Papal Inquisition to root out members of the Cathar faith thereby assume striking resemblances to the methods utilized by the Ministry of Public Security, the Polish secret police, in the Stalinist era of the Polish People's Republic. And by the same token, the thread of a dialogue between East and West that runs through the travelogue in its entirety cannot be divorced from the contemporary diplomatic divide manifested in the Iron Curtain. As will be shown, Herbert's emphasis on the productive value of an intercultural give-and-take that overcomes ideological, denominational, and social boundaries represents an indirect attack on the political schism that has attempted to separate Europe into two hermetically sealed halves.

The borders in this chapter are admittedly more abstract than in the previous two, though this is hardly to say that material borders were of no concern to Herbert or his work.[222] Indeed, the term *granica* as it appears in Herbert's writing more frequently refers to intellectual boundaries than concrete geopolitical borders, as in the title of his early essay on Hamlet cited above. Perhaps to a greater degree than either of the German authors, Herbert is preoccupied primarily with a kind of transborder thinking, which is to say that his writing both represents and performs attempts to

[222] To indicate the impact of Cold War borders on Herbert's travels, Andrzej Franaszek cites a passage from a letter the author wrote to the Polish author-in-exile Kazimierz Wierzyński, in which the former describes the difficulties of traveling to Western Europe as a citizen of a People's Republic in the Eastern Bloc: "I am the possessor of a people's [*ludowego*] passport, which means that I cannot simply go to the train station, buy a ticket to Rome and depart. For a visa to any country I have to wait around for two months, and on top of that I need a formal invitation with a provision stating that my sponsor will defray my living expenses." Cited in Andrzej Franaszek, *Herbert. Biografia. Tom II: Pan Cogito* (Kraków: Znak, 2018), 53.

proceed beyond ideologically and culturally imposed restraints on thought, affect, and action. The formal aspect of this operation has already been indicated with regard to his use of the essay, but it appears in his poetry as well, specifically in the prose poems contained in the collection *Hermes, pies i gwiazda* (Hermes, dog and star) published in 1957. Herbert's melding of various genres of writing stages the very principle of integration that he advocates in opposition to the violent regimes of exclusion and purity that he identifies in the crusades carried out by the medieval Catholic Church, the colonial campaigns of the Greeks and Romans, and by comparison the Soviet-led consolidation of the communist Eastern Bloc, particularly in the years before Nikita Khrushchev's famous denunciation of Stalin in 1956. Still, this abstract principle of combination is never completely divorced from a more concrete preoccupation with space and territory, which is precisely why his travelogues constitute the clearest expression of his unique mode of writing and thinking. As he indicated in a short speech delivered on the sixtieth birthday of his German publisher Siegfried Unseld, Herbert's travel between Eastern and Western Europe stages the very dialogue he wishes to actualize in his texts. His first meeting with Unseld occurred in 1964 in Frankfurt am Main, when Herbert "was returning […] to Poland from France (as part of [his] private and not always fortuitous East-West dialogue)."[223] (*MD*, 175) This description of an "East-West dialogue" should not be taken purely metaphorically, as is made clear by the subsequently described face-to-face meeting and conversation with the former Wehrmacht soldier Unseld. As Herbert puts it, the latter belonged to a generation of Germans who, "to put it delicately, were not my allies," at least during the war. (*MD*, 175; *mowiąc delikatnie, nie byli moimi aliantami*) Nevertheless, the conversation develops into a rich exchange concerning writers from both sides of the Iron Curtain. As this anecdote indicates, Herbert's overcoming of travel restrictions, his

[223] "Wracałem wtedy z Francji do Polski (w ramach mego prywatnego i nie zawsze fortunnego dialogu Wschód-Zachód)."

passage from Eastern to Western Europe and back again is not merely a symbolic gesture signifying a transcendence of ideological dogma and a breakdown of limiting systems of thinking and acting. It is quite literally this border-crossing activity that allows for the expansive and unhindered elaboration of his thought.

Finally, this chapter is intended to contribute to a growing number of scholarly works on Zbigniew Herbert that endeavor to wrest him from appropriation by the nationalist Polish right.[224] Owing to the author's self-stylization as the poetic spokesperson for *Solidarność* in the 1980s, alongside his harsh criticism of Polish authors who had allegedly collaborated with the early Stalinist regime under Bolesław Bierut and his attacks on the supposedly unpatriotic Nobel Laureate Czesław Miłosz, the poet became the darling of the new Polish right after the foundation of the Third Polish Republic in 1989.[225] As Andrzej Franaszek has indicated, this image of the author as a heroic national figure in the wake of the Eastern Bloc's collapse is not entirely the invention of duplicitous political agents, as Herbert's moralistic late writings greatly contributed to the construction of this image.[226] Nevertheless, close readings of Herbert's early texts, above all his travelogues, reveals facets of the author's work that are difficult to reconcile with this nationalistic reading. For instance, the already-cited description of Hamlet's virtuous hesitation and the portrayal of Mr. Cogito frozen in the moment before his "leap into finitude" stand in sharp

[224] Examples of this trend can be found in, e.g., Stanisław Barańczak, *Uciekinier z Utopii: O poezji Zbigniewa Herberta* [Fugitive from utopia: On the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert], 2nd ed. (Wrocław: Tow. Przyjaciół Polonistyki Wrocławskiej, 1994); Andrzej Franaszek, *Ciemne źródło: Esej o cierpieniu w twórczości Zbigniewa Herberta* [Dark source: An essay on suffering in the work of Zbigniew Herbert] (Kraków: Znak, 2008); Julian Kornhauser. *Uśmiech sfinska: O poezji Zbigniewa Herberta* [Smile of the sphinx: On the poetry of Zbigniew Herbert] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001).

[225] For his critique of authors active under Stalinism, see Jacek Trznadel, "Rozmowa ze Zbigniewem Herbertem: Wypluć z siebie wszystko" [Conversation with Zbigniew Herbert: Spitting it all out], in *Hańba domowa: Rozmowy z pisarzami* [Domestic ignominy: Conversations with authors], 6th ed. (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Paweł Skokowski, 1993). For his criticisms of his former friend and translator Miłosz, see: Andrzej Franaszek, *Pan Cogito*, 677-695.

[226] Andrzej Franaszek, *Ciemne źródło*, 9-10.

contrast to the muscular, bellicose portrait of the writer painted by the Polish right.[227] Drawing inspiration from Franaszek's counterbalancing emphasis on the weakness and suffering found throughout Herbert's work, the following interpretation will underline the manner in which the author consistently drew attention to the deficiencies and even impossibility of his vision of a united Europe. Indeed, one perceives the fragility of his trans-European project, if one may call it that, already in the description of his travels as part of his "private and not always fortuitous East-West dialogue." Nevertheless, the author's travels and travel writings, as will become clear in what follows, are carried out in opposition to an ideological and cultural division that is made manifest in the Iron Curtain, though its roots can already be located in antiquity and run through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and Early Modern Europe.

**II. Crossing Europe**

As already stated, *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, as opposed to both *Das dritte Buch über Achim* and *Das steinerne Herz*, not only makes spare mention of the author's country of residence, it appears to avoid the post-Yalta political geography of Europe entirely. It is thus helpful to turn to some of Herbert's ancillary writings on his travels in order to understand, in his own words, the purpose of these journeys. The next two sections will focus on two texts that the author penned after the publication of *Barbarzyńca* in 1962. Both of these short texts, coincidentally, were written for West German radio stations. The first text discussed here, "Wizja Europy" (Vision of Europe), was written for the Hessischer Rundfunk in Frankfurt am Main in 1973, though it was never broadcast. Instead, the manuscript was found nearly a decade after the poet's death in 1998 and

[227] An example of this portrait can be found in Bohdan Urbankowski's 2004 biography of Herbert entitled *Poeta, czyli człowiek zwielokrotniony* (The poet, or the amplified man). Urbankowski is a columnist for the conservative Catholic political monthly *Wpis* (Inscription) and has written similarly impressionistic biographies of Adam Mickiewicz, Józef Piłsudski, and Pope John Paul II.

published in the literary quarterly *Zeszyty Literackie* (Literary notebooks). The text is surprisingly polished for what was likely a working draft, and it speaks directly to the argument laid out in the introductory section of this chapter, namely the contemporary relevance of his art-historical travelogues. As the author explicitly states in the manuscript, the Hessian radio station commissioned Herbert to write up a list of comments on the idea of a "vision of Europe." The request could not have been a neutral one, as the term "Europe," much like "Berlin," was defined variously based on the perspective of the speaker. Ernst Jünger, for instance, restricted the European tradition to the western side of the Iron Curtain in his 1953 essay *Der gordische Knoten*, whereas the Soviet bloc was a successor of Cyrus the Great's Persia, Attila's Hunnic Empire, and the Ottoman Turks.[228] Indeed, Herbert demonstrates his awareness of this perspectival bias while delineating the frustrating reception of his own works in Western Europe, where the unspoken import of his texts is passed over by an audience (perhaps willfully) ignorant of the specific context in which they are written. In an ironic gesture characteristic of Herbert's writing, the poet refers to himself and his work in the third person:

> In my country lives a writer who is fascinated with Europe, its history and culture. During certain periods such a fascination was frankly dangerous. He wrote a good number of works dedicated to the Judeo-Greek-Christian tradition. Published in Poitiers or Tübingen, these works would classify him as a peaceful person, observing life from a distance, reluctantly engaging in the heated disputes of his contemporaries. And it was rather difficult for him to explain to his Western colleagues that, writing about the Athenian invasion of the kindred island of Samos, about the trials of the Templars and the Albigensians, he had contemporary events on his mind. […] Whenever his manuscripts wandered into the West, they were generally favorably received as works demonstrating the author's erudition,

[228] "Das »Europäische Russland« fassen wir als geographischen Begriff. Es war europäischer zur Zeit der beiden Alexander und auch zu der Elisabeths und Katharinas als zu der Zeit Stalins. Das Wort *Orient* führt den Geist in südöstlicher Richtung, und doch liegt nicht nur der Südhang des Kaukasus, sondern liegen auch Städte wie Astrachan, Moskau, Kiew und Smarkand in orientalischem Glanz." Ernst Jünger, *Der Gordische Knoten*, in *Betrachtungen zur Zeit*, vol. 9 of *Sämtliche Werke* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2015), 390. Jünger's use of the terms *Abendland* and *Orient* is closer to the Nietzschean distinction between the Apollonian and Dionysian than it is political-geographical discourse, as he indicates here; as with the Apollonian and the Dionysian, each individual and culture possesses elements of both: "Wiederum ist zu erinnern, daß Morgen- und Abendland nicht als absolute Orte aufzufassen sind, sondern als Gleichnisse für zwei menschliche Grundhaltungen." Ibid., 397. Nevertheless, this does not keep certain states and regions from consistently exhibiting one set of traits more than the other, at least in Jünger's view.

> culture, and technical merit. To him, these were pitiful complements. It was as if the entire passion and rebelliousness of his work had suddenly vanished by simply crossing a border.[229]

Herbert's description of the reception of his writing in Western Europe suggests that a unified Europe with a shared mode of interpretation is not a contemporary reality. In such circumstances, the author would not necessarily be safe in assuming that the underlying significance of his ruminations on Europe would be equally grasped by all. On the contrary, as was the case with Uwe Johnson, a presumably innocent response to a supposedly innocuous request could prove useful to political actors threatened by a more expansive understanding of Europe and the European tradition.

Instead of simply taking for granted a uniform conception of Europe and thereby lessening the impact of his project, Herbert highlights the potentially subversive power of an impartial and equal-handed meditation on the concept. As he emphasizes, the idea of Europe is not always considered harmless. Indeed, in the PRL, even after the Polish October of 1956, one could cite the fate of the planned literary journal *Europa*, for which the renowned writers Jerzy Andrzejewski and Mieczysław Jastrun were to be the editors-in-chief and Herbert himself was to be on the editorial staff.[230] As Franaszek describes in his biography of Herbert, the title of the journal

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[229] "W moim kraju mieszka pisarz zafascynowany Europą, jej historią i kulturą. W pewnych okresach takie zafascynowanie było po prostu niebezpieczne. Napisał sporo utworów poświęconych tradycji judeogreckochrześcijańskiej. Te same prace publikowane w Poitiers czy Tybindze kwalifikowałyby go jako człowieka spokojnego, patrzącego na życie z dystansu, niechętnie angażującego się w gorące spory współczesności. I trudno mu było naprawdę wytłumaczyć swym zachodnim kolegom, że pisząc o najeździe Ateńczyków na bratnią wyspę Samos, o procesach templariuszy czy albigensach, miał na myśli wydarzenia współczesne. […] Kiedy jego rękopisy wędrowały na Zachód, oceniono je na ogół przychylnie jako prace wykazujące duże odczytanie autora, kulturę i zalety warsztatu. Były to dla niego żałosne komplementy. To tak jakby cała pasja i bunt ulotniły się nagle przez prosty fakt przekroczenia granicy." (*MD*, 126-7)

[230] Andrzejewski's invitation to Herbert to visit the editorial office comically conveys the editor's full awareness of the new monthly's symbolic status; the former sent the young poet precise directions because "as we all know, Europe is hard to find, generally speaking." Cited in Andrzej Franaszek, *Herbert. Biografia. Tom I: Niepokój* (Kraków: Znak, 2018), 560.

signaled the editors' hope that Poland might return to the European fold after Stalinism: "In accordance with the title, the journal manifested the conviction that Polish culture was returning to the European family. A dialogue between authors that transcended political divisions was once again possible."[231] Nevertheless, though the first issue was to contain contributions by some of Poland's most well-known authors (Maria Dąbrowska, Adam Ważyk, Czesław Miłosz, and Paweł Hertz, among others), the journal was put to an end in 1957 before its first publication, as the new First Secretary Władysław Gomułka sought to scale back some of the liberal concessions made to halt worker protests the previous year.[232] Gomułka's decision to suspend the journal before the publication of its first issue must have been a clear signal to Herbert and his colleagues that a renewed discussion of Europe, much less a trans-European collaboration by writers from both sides of the Iron Curtain, was not blessed with the approval of the Polish United Workers' Party, even after the post-Stalinist reforms. Naturally, the heterodox potential of the European tradition and the idea of Europe was not easily grasped in Western Europe, which for the most part conceived of itself as the inheritor of a European tradition that included Ancient Greece, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Enlightenment. Thus, Herbert's short text, written with West German listeners in mind, begins by making explicit for a Western audience that which might be implicitly grasped by Eastern Europeans, which is to say the contentious quality of his seemingly peaceful ruminations.[233]

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[231] Ibid., 56.

[232] Significantly, the issue was to include an article by the writer, translator, and literary critic Juliusz Żuławski entitled "O geografii i logice literatury" (On the geography and logic of literature). See Łukasz Garbal and Dorota Szczerba, "Nota edytorska do reedycji miesięcznika 'Europa'"[Editorial note on the re-edition of the monthly 'Europe'], *Teksty Drugie* 1-2 (2008), 297-301.

[233] As Herbert's translator into English, Czesław Miłosz made similar attempts to correct this misreading while emphasizing the "Eastern" quality of Herbert's work. In 1961 he planned to include the following comment alongside his translation of *Elegy of Fortinbras* in the English literary magazine *Encounter*, though there was ultimately not enough space for it: "[U]nder no circumstances is Herbert a 'Western' author; he uses a refined technique in order to

This opening rejoinder to his reception in the West thus represents an attempt to undermine his previous treatment as a traditional classicist beholden primarily to the aesthetic precepts of antiquity and willfully ignorant of the political struggles and artistic movements of his contemporary moment. In a later explication of his poem *Dlaczego klasycy?* (Why the classics?), which was published in the 1969 collection *Napis* (Inscription), Herbert notes that his dedication to classicism as he understands it in fact constitutes a commitment to reality over against the subjectivism of the Romantic tradition and the self-contained literary experiments of the avantgarde:

> Very early, almost at the beginning of my career as a writer, I arrived at the conviction that I must get hold of [*zdobyć*] some kind of object beyond literature [*poza literaturą*]. Writing as a stylistic exercise seemed empty to me. […] I had to go beyond myself and literature [*wyjść poza siebie i poza literaturą*] and look around in the world in order to reach [*zdobyć*] different domains of reality."[234] (*MD*, 141)

The poem itself—an explicit comparison between the Peloponnesian War and "latterday wars"—is already an answer to those who would perceive the author's preoccupation with the ancient world as a diversion from recent history.[235] But perhaps more importantly, Herbert's insistence here on the outspokenly realist quality of his writing, inspired by classical literature and philosophy, presents it as an alternative to both the highly influential tradition of Polish Romanticism and the restrictive demands of Socialist Realism, which the poet criticized

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capture the collective experience that so infrequently engages his English, French, and American peers. He is fascinated by the problem of power and the state; he even describes Judgement Day in categories of violence." Cited in Andrzej Franaszek, *Pan Cogito*, 11.

[234] "Bardzo wcześnie, bo prawie na początku mojej pracy pisarskiej, doszedłem do przekonania, że muszę zdobyć jakiś przedmiot poza literaturą. Pisanie jako ćwiczenie stylistyczne wydawało mi się jałowe. […] Musiałem wyjść poza siebie i poza literaturę, rozglądnąć się po świecie, by zdobyć inne sfery rzeczywistości."

[235] For Polish readers, comparisons between Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* and the Second World War were already a common trope; see Mieczysław Jastrun, *Mit śródziemnomorski* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1962), 14-15; Tadeusz Kroński, *Faszyzm a tradycja europejska* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo IFIS PAN, 2014), 29-30. Herbert attended Kroński's lectures on Marxist philosophy while a student at the University of Warsaw in the early fifties. Andrzej Franaszek, *Niepokój*, 384-5.

throughout his career. Notable in this citation is a vocabulary that exhibits the poet's minimally stylized poetics as an attempt to move "beyond" (*poza*) the strictures of these styles in an attempt to seize upon or obtain (*zdobyć*) extra-literary reality through careful observation of the object of description and an unwavering effort to craft a kind of consonance between that object and a selected textual form. It is a vocabulary not of transcendence, as concrete reality for Herbert is not located in some unattainable realm, but of border-crossing, representing an endeavor to pass over the bounds of the text and into the world of things. As will become clear in the subsequent analysis of *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, this effort is not exclusive to the author's poetic work, and it arguably comes across most notably in his employment of ekphrasis, one of the central literary devices found in his travelogues.

Returning to "Wizja Europy," the Athenian invasion of Samos, the trials of the Knights Templar, and the persecution of the Albigensians mentioned in the longer passage cited above are described in detail in three separate "sketches" of *Barbarzyńca*. Though this short unpublished text does not specifically state the title of his early travelogue, one could read it as a helpful supplement to that longer collection. For one, it nudges toward an allegorical reading of the text, indicating similarities between the chronicled events and corresponding contemporary occurrences while simultaneously explaining the author's need for allegory:

> That is why he set in motion these heavy historical siege engines; that is why he made use of allegory and donned masks—because he could not speak otherwise and did not even want to speak otherwise. A bout with the president or secretary reduces literature to the hell of opinion journalism."[236] (*MD*, 127)

[236] "Po to uruchamiał te ciężkie historyczne machiny, dlatego posługiwał się alegorią i przywdziewał maskę – ponieważ nie mógł mówić inaczej, a nawet nie chciał mówić inaczej. Walka z byle prezydentem czy sekretarzem sprowadza literaturę w piekło publicystyki."

Herbert's mode of writing is not merely derived from the necessity to avoid censorship or even harsher forms of punishment. As will be further discussed in what follows, it arises out of a desire to uphold a valuable distinction between literature and political commentary. But aside from unveiling the historical resonances between Cold War Europe and the Middle Ages, among other epochs, "Wizja Europy" also draws out the relevance of Cold War borders and border-crossings to this work. Indeed, the short text features his most explicit acknowledgement of the centrality of the term and concept *granica* to his work—in this case not as a religiously, ideologically, or culturally imposed hindrance on thought, but as the hard, political-geographical division known as the Iron Curtain. After describing the misunderstandings and mis-readings produced when texts cross borders, Herbert writes, "I used the word 'border' [*granica*]. This indicates that I will be speaking about two Europes."[237] (*MD*, 127) But in addition to addressing this prominent Cold War schism between Eastern and Western Europe, the author goes on to castigate the function of political borders in general, particularly in their twentieth century form as the manifestations and guarantors of ethnic nationalism:

> One of the overlooked consequences of the Second World War is the rise of ethnically pure nations, a fact that demands reflection. More than perhaps ever before in history, political borders coincide with ethnic borders. […] Ethnically pure nations may be ideal from a political point of view, but I doubt [*wątpię*] they are ideal in the world of culture.[238] (*MD*, 128)

One notes here Herbert's deployment of the doubt that he so valued in Hamlet's hesitancy, a staple of the literary discourse that the author opposes to both rigorous philosophical systems and exclusively political modes of thought, as he confirms elsewhere in the text: "I promise nothing

[237] "Użyłem słowa „granica". Oznacza to, że będę mówił o dwu Europach."

[238] "Jednym z przeoczonych wyników drugiej wojny światowej jest fakt wymagający zastanowienia, a mianowicie powstanie państw etnicznie czystych. Granice polityczne jak chyba nigdy jeszcze w historii pokrywają się z granicami narodów. […] Z politycznego punktu widzenie państwo etnicznie czyste jest być może ideałem, ale wątpię, czy jest ono ideałem w świecie kultury."

other than a register of doubts [*wątpliwości*] and anxieties as the arrogant certainty of dogmatic politicians and the grim visions of futurologists is foreign to me."[239] (*MD*, 127) The final sentence of the previous citation, alongside its ironically incisive characterization of politics, also speaks for the specific importance of the cultural realm to the author's project. As opposed to the political domain, which according to Carl Schmitt, for instance, is founded upon the friend-enemy distinction, culture profits from the intermingling of unlike elements and deteriorates under regimes of division.

The wellspring of Herbert's critique of monoethnic nation-states is, as he outlines in this text, his birthplace. In a statement insinuating the similarities between writing and map-making—in a manner reminiscent of Arno Schmidt—he informs the reader that, rather than simply report on the Cold War division and thereby redraw the line of demarcation between East and West, his "vision of Europe" will focus on a single point: "But before I attempt to trace the dividing lines [*linie podziału*], I will do my best to demarcate a point on the map of particular importance to me."[240] (*MD*, 127) Herbert's characteristic language of effort is particularly pronounced in this short sentence, once more emphasizing the poet's uncertainty in clear contradistinction to the cocksureness of the statesman. The point on the map is, of course, Lwów, but the author's initial description of the place lays less significance on the city itself than on its geographical location and its natural terrain: "I was born in a city located at a large watershed [*na wielkim dziale wód*], halfway between the Baltic and the Black Sea."[241] (*MD*, 127) Herbert juxtaposes here the natural

[239] "Nie obiecuję nic innego jak rejestr wątpliwości i niepokojów, obca bowiem jest mi arogancka pewność dogmatycznych polityków i ponure wizje futurologów."

[240] "Ale zanim spróbuję nakreślić linie podziału, postaram się wyznaczyć pewien istotny dla mnie punkt na mapie."

[241] "Urodziłem się w mieście leżącym na wielkim dziale wód, w połowie drogi między Morzem Bałtyckim a Morzem Czarnym."

formation of the watershed or drainage divide (*dział wód*) to the manmade, political "dividing lines" (*linie podziału*) between Eastern and Western Europe. The effect of highlighting Lwów's placement along the European watershed, which divides the river basins that empty into the Atlantic Ocean from those that feed the Black Sea, is not to delineate a natural boundary as the basis of a more objective separation of Europe into its eastern and western halves. Instead, the author's invocation of the *dział wód* offers an alternative and elemental mode of orientation that offsets the rigidity and purported artlessness of Cold War lines of demarcation. Furthermore, considering Herbert's lifelong preoccupation with Pre-Socratic philosophers and their elemental worldview, it is noteworthy that his vision of Europe, intended to chastise its stringent contemporary partitioning, begins under the sign of water, which is to say of fluidity.[242] Moreover, the identification of his hometown as lying between the Baltic and the Black Seas is reminiscent of Józef Piłsudski's post-World War I geopolitical project Intermarium (*Międzymorze*), which imagined a multinational federation of Central and Eastern European states (i.e., Belarus, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia) extending from the Black Sea to the Baltic. The project, which failed due to the opposition of some newly established members (i.e., Lithuania and Ukraine), Russia, and the majority of the Western powers (excepting France), was itself inspired by the expansive multiethnic and multidenominational Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth that lasted from the mid-sixteenth century until the Third Partition in 1795. In this manner, Herbert arguably packs three distinct modes of geographical orientation (i.e., European watershed, Intermarium, and Polish-

[242] Piotr Siemaszko describes the centrality of Anaximander's four fundamental elements (air, earth, water, and fire) to Herbert's essays: Piotr Siemaszko, *Zmienność i trwanie: O eseistyce Zbigniewa Herberta* [Mutability and duration: On the essayistic workw of Zbigniew Herbert] (Bydgoszcz: Institut Wydawniczy „Świadectwo", 1996), 32.

Lithuanian Commonwealth) into a single sentence, thereby destabilizing and denaturalizing the contemporary geopolitical status quo.

The following paragraph extends this operation of alternative mapping and describes the city of his childhood in evocative terms that resonate with many of the major motifs found in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*:

> This city of my childhood lay at the great crossroads from west to east and from north to south. Medieval ramparts, a gothic cathedral, lovely Renaissance tenements along the market square, Baroque churches—all of these created a surprisingly harmonious unity striking to every newcomer. And the newcomers were many and often stayed here forever. Thus arose over the long centuries a mosaic of cultures and peoples.[243] (*MD*, 127)

The previously mentioned principle of combination so characteristic of Herbert's work is encapsulated here in a spatial metaphor: the crossroads or crossing (*skrzyżowanie*). In point of fact, with regard to Lwów it would be inaccurate to call this crossing a metaphor, as the author perceives a causal relationship between this intersection of crisscrossing paths and the patchwork of architectural styles on display in the multiethnic city. The roads conveying new arrivals transport cultural practices from every corner of Europe, such that the city's position at this junction lends itself to a rich blend of diverse customs, lifestyles, values, and ideas. The metaphor of the mosaic, though also metonymically connected to the city through its popularity in the Armenian population, offers another strikingly appropriate image, as the ancient artform features a meandering line of continuity that binds together Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, and Jewish communities, coming to a halt only at the onset of the Renaissance. Interestingly, the author's list of periods and styles coincides with the majority of those addressed in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, as if Lwów contained within itself the itinerary of Herbert's future travels. Indeed, one could argue

[243] "Owo miasto mego dzieciństwa leżało na wielkim skrzyżowaniu dróg z zachodu na wschód i z południa na północ. Średniowieczne mury obronne, gotycka katedra, piękne renesansowe kamienice na rynku, barokowe kościoły tworzyły zaskakująco harmonijną całość, która uderzała każdego przybysza. A przybyszów było wielu i często zostawali tutaj na zawsze. Tak w ciągu długich wieków powstała mozaika wielu kultur i narodów."

that the travelogue represents the author's attempt to piece together the individual elements of the city of his childhood, as if regaining his lost home via peregrinations through postwar western Europe.

The multiethnic Lwów of the interwar period, with its diverse population of Ukrainians, Belarussians, Russians, Jews, Armenians, and Poles, represents a model for Herbert's conception of Europe, as the title of the piece already indicates: "[B]ut I remember well my hometown and above all the lesson it gave me. I will remember it for the rest of my life. It shaped my first vision of Europe."[244] (*MD*, 127) Distinct from the "grim visions of futurologists," Herbert's vision here is, like Mr. Cogito balancing on the stone slab, Janus-faced, both forward- and backward-looking. His fantasy of a European future draws its inspiration from an already forgotten past. However, Herbert also acknowledges the inevitable abstraction that comes with recollection: "Memories, of course, color reality and it is possible that my hometown was, in actuality, less beautiful than it now appears to me."[245] (*MD*, 128) This idealizing operation of memory lends a utopian quality to the author's vision, a space for the creativity of the poet's imagination to co-construct a scaffolding for the future that has as its blueprint a space from the past. At the same time, however, it runs the risk of erasing inconvenient facts that do not align with the author's goals, a reduction that Herbert denounces in his unpublished "Diariusz grecki" (Greek diary). After noting, to his surprise, the "admixture [*domieszka*] of Slavic and Turkic elements" in the bodies and physiognomies of Greek passersby while people-watching in Piraeus, the poet is reminded of an amusing anecdote

[244] "[P]amiętam jednak dobrze moje rodzinne miasto i nade wszystko lekcję, jakiej mi udzieliło. Zapamiętam ją na całe życie. Ona ukształtowała moją pierwszą wizję Europy."

[245] "Wspomnienia oczywiście kolorują rzeczywistość i być może moje rodzinne miasto mniej było piękne w rzeczywistości, niż mi się wydaje."

concerning the English Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and the novelist and adventurer Edward John Trelawny:

> I remember how Shelley, while writing his narrative poem *Hellas*, was invited by his ironic friend Trelawny to meet real Greeks. Trelawny set out for Livorno with the poet, where they toured a Greek ship full of "a throng of gypsy-like people who hollered, gesticulated, smoked, ate, and gambled like barbarians [*jak barbarzyńcy*]." And in addition, the captain of the ship had turned his back on his homeland as, to his mind, the war of independence did not further his interests. I think that one conclusion must be deduced from this anecdote: nations have more important, more elementary concerns than being similar to an ideal conceived by Romantic humanists.[246] (*MD*, 25-6)

The disruption of Shelley's ideal of Hellenic beauty, which Herbert himself had just seen "completely blurred" (*MD*, 25) by Turkish and Slavic traits, at the hands of the Romantic poet's "ironic" travel companion bears great significance for the Polish author, who employs irony in a similarly dismantling fashion in his own, far more ambiguous use of the word *barbarzyńca*. As will be seen, his travels also upend the age-old distinction between Greeks and barbarians, though not by ironically identifying the *domieszka* or impurity of modern Greeks. Instead, Herbert locates the presence of "barbarism" or "barbaric" behavior in the very civilization that conceived of itself in opposition to said barbarians—Ancient Greece.

Unlike Shelley and Trelawny's unexpectedly disruptive experience of the Greek ship in the Italian port of Livorno, Herbert's travels in Western Europe are intentionally conceived as deconstructions of one-dimensional conceptions of national and local cultures. His trips amount to searches for realms of contradiction, where the co-presence of seemingly discrepant ways of life

[246] "Przypomina mi się, jak to Shelleya w okresie pisania poematu Hellas zaprosił jego ironiczny przyjaciel Trelawny, aby poznał prawdziwych Greków. Trelawny wybrał się z poetą do Livorno i zwiedził statek grecki wypełniony „tłumem podobnym do Cyganów, który wrzeszczał, gestykulował, palił, jadł i grał jak barbarzyńcy". I w dodatku kapitan tego statku porzucił ojczyznę, ponieważ uważał, że wojna o niepodległość nie sprzyja jego interesom. Myślę, że z anegdoty tej wyciągnąć należy jeden wniosek: narody mają ważniejsze, bardziej elementarne sprawy niż troskę o to, aby być podobne do ideału stworzonego przez romantycznych humanistów."

upends the application of simple labels and forges impressive cultural products, as he explains in "Wizja Europy":

> While traveling around Western Europe many years later, I instinctively sought out the cities and countries where one could trace the presence of many seemingly conflicting [*sprzeczynych*] cultural strata. I was attracted to Sicily with its traces of Greeks, Arabs, and Normans, as I sensed that things of importance, not only in art but in life as well, arise from the peaceful clash [*starciu*] of ideas and thoughts.[247] (*MD*, 127-8)

One encounters in this short passage many of the keywords from *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, including those emphasizing contradiction (*sprzeczność*) and conflict, though the clash (*starcie*) described here is notably a "peaceful" one. In addition, though the region in question is western Europe—as opposed to the Central European borderlands of Herbert's childhood that ensured the conjunction of Eastern and Western elements by sheer dint of geography—, the author brings it into contact with the East, so to speak. Though Sicily, for instance, belongs to Western Europe, at least according to its geographical position vis-à-vis the Iron Curtain, the remains of Arab-Norman art and architecture on the Italian island speak to its participation in eastern culture, in this context Islam.[248] To be sure, the connection between Arab culture, in this case from North Africa, and the Soviet Bloc is a tenuous one and arguably supports the generalizations made by thinkers like Jünger, to say nothing of the Enlightenment-era travelers who based their creation of the concept of Eastern Europe partially on imagined similarities between the cultures of Eastern Europe and

[247] "Kiedy wiele lat później podróżowałem po Europie Zachodniej, poszukiwałem instynktownie takich miast i krajów, w których można było śledzić obecność wielu sprzecznych – zdawałoby się – z sobą warstw kulturowych. Pociągała mnie Sycylia z śladami Greków, Arabów i Normanów, przeczuwałem bowiem, że to, co ważne, nie tylko w sztuce, ale i w życiu powstaje w pokojowym starciu idei i myśli."

[248] Herbert's appreciation of the peaceful coexistence of multiple faiths and ethnicities in the medieval Kingdom of Sicily was likely inspired by the Russian travel writer Pavel Muratow, whose three-volume *Obrazy italii* (Images of Italy) from the early twentieth century was popular in Poland. In it, Muratow describes the surprising willingness of the Norman invaders from the north to "surrender to the influences" of the preexisting Arab culture, thereby offering a countermodel to the oppressive colonial regimes that Herbert describes in *Barbarzyńca*. Paweł Muratow, *Obrazy Włoch: Sycylia i Apulia*, trans. Paweł Hertz (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2013), 87.

those of the 'Orient.'[249] However, Herbert takes full advantage of his literary license in drawing this analogy. For instance, in his notes for the sketch "O albigensach, inkwizytorach i trubadurach" (On the Albigensians, the inquisitors, and the troubadours), one encounters the following formulation: "the Orient [*Orient*] speaks in Catharism."[250] The published text, of course, reads differently: "It is a thing of certainty that the voice of the East [*głos Wschodu*] was heard in their heresy or, as others would have it, their religion." (*BO*, 123-4) The decision, presumably, to change *Orient* to *Wschód* ("East") was likely based on the author's wish to fit this episode into the larger "East-West dialogue" that runs through the collection of travel essays.

Or to push the logic of this decision even further, one could argue that Herbert's use of the vague designation "East" with regard to the Albigensian heresy is part of a strategy to empty this term of its meaning, or at the very least to problematize its presumed historical consistency. Unlike Jünger, Herbert does not attempt to ascribe any essential qualities to the adjectives 'Eastern' or 'Western.' As he demonstrates more extensively in *Barbarzyńca*, if one traces the development of many of the most canonical Western European cultural movements far enough into the past, one invariably finds the overwhelming presence of 'Eastern' or 'Oriental' influences—to such a degree that the meanings of such designations are repeatedly drawn into question. This entanglement of Eastern/Oriental and Western European cultural strands is yet another legacy of his childhood home, as he indicates in "Wizja Europy": "According to art historians, [the unique nuance of my hometown] is based on a happy amalgamation, the symbiosis of native, Western European, Byzantine, and Oriental elements."[251] (*MD*, 128) In a sense, the determination of seemingly

[249] See Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 42-49.

[250] Zbigniew Herbert, Notatniki [Notebooks], akc. 17955, t. 6: 32, Archiwum Zbigniewa Herberta [The archive of Zbigniew Herbert], Biblioteka Narodowa [National library], Zakład Rękopisów [Manuscript department], Warsaw.

[251] "Zdaniem historyków sztuki polegał [osobliwy odcień mojego rodzinnego miasta] na szczęśliwym połączeniu, symbiozie pierwiastków rodzimych, zachodnioeuropejskich, bizantyńskich i orientalnych." As described below,

incongruous cultural traditions in a single place such as Sicily—to say nothing of an artist like Piero della Francesca or even a single artwork like the Orvieto cathedral—effectively takes this Lwówian patchwork as a schema for observation. The etymologically-related terms *śledzić* ("to trace" or "track") and *ślady* ("traces" or "tracks") encountered in the block quotation above are, like *sprzeczność* and *starcie*, fundamental to the author's travel essays as well, as they delineate the method and the objects of observation, respectively. The paintings, buildings, and other art objects described in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* are not self-contained works devoid of context and history. Rather, they are the products of a long historical trajectory with various twists and turns. In fact, one would not be wrong to perceive in Herbert's method of *śledzić* something of the Nietzschean genealogical method used by the philosopher in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* to unearth the extra-moral origins and thus the utility of the seemingly ahistorical value system introduced by Christian morality.[252] In this respect, Herbert's relativization of the terms East and West, along with 'civilization' and 'barbarism,' is not unlike Nietzsche's overturning of the presumably transhistorical binary opposition good and evil.

Visible in his highlighting of elements of variegated provenance in cultures elsewhere described in monolithic terms is what one might describe as the poet's use of the borderlands as a method. Though various boundaries and borders, be they metaphorical or literal, appear in the

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Herbert argues that it was not luck (*szczęście*) that brought about this amalgamation, but rather a specific set of political, social, and intellectual circumstances.

[252] Herbert and his mentor Henryk Elzenberg were both heavily influenced by Nietzsche's thought and work. In 1953 the former wrote the following in a letter to his childhood friend Zdzisław Ruziewicz after his philosophical studies at the University of Warsaw were brought to an early end: "I am living in the mountain air of solitude, reading Nietzsche (…) testing out his ideas on themes such as: love, contemporary poetry […], Marxism and revolution (…), immortality (having lost my metaphysical intuition regarding the immortality of the soul, I am trying to understand the theory of eternal return)." Cited in Andrzej Franaszek, *Niepokój*, 473. For more on the influence of Nietzsche's ideas on Herbert's work, particularly on his 1956 play *Jaskinia filozofów* (The cave of philosophers), see Halina Kozdęba-Murray, "Wątki nietzscheańskie w wybranych wierszach Herberta oraz w dramacie Jaskinia filozofów" [Nietzschean motifs in Herbert's selected poems and the drama Cave of philosophers], *Prace Naukowe Akademii im. Jana Długosza w Częstochowie. Filozofia* [Research papers from the Academy of Jan Długosz in Częstochowa. Philosophy] 13 (2016), 97-113.

little-known yet programmatic texts "Wizja Europy" and "Diariusz grecki," what these texts primarily delineate is a mode of analysis and reading that can be applied not only to purportedly central locations far from the cultural margins of Eastern Europe, but also to the visual, literary, and culinary arts. In *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie,* his emphasis on the co-presence of Gothic and Byzantine features in the works of the Trecento painter Duccio di Buoninsegna, for instance, employs Lwów as a kind of template for interpretation, albeit at a much smaller scale. And this model of reading not only widens the frame of analysis to consider the influence of seemingly distant cultures and artistic movements, it also looks beyond the strictly artistic domain to contemplate the effects of contemporaneous political and economic developments, as Herbert indicates in his characterization of Lwów's multicultural atmosphere: "I daresay that it was not a happy coincidence. It had as its prerequisite the creation of certain socio-political as well as spiritual conditions, an outsized tolerance, hospitality toward foreigners, and a lack of biases and religious as well as racial prejudices."[253] (*MD*, 128) In this regard, Herbert's approach, shaped as it is by the heterogenous city of his upbringing as he portrays it, appears quite unaligned with the Lwów of Bohdan Urbankowski, one of the author's many conservative contemporary readers who would rather minimize the inclusivity promoted in his work. In his highly selective and predominantly biographical interpretation of the poet's work, Urbankowski writes, "From a political perspective, Lwów was a fortress that for centuries kept enemies from gaining access to the hinterlands, whereas from a demographic perspective it was the essence of the multinational and multicultural Republic."[254] Though the description of Lwów as a "fortress" may have been

[253] "Nie był to zapewne szczęśliwy przypadek. Wymagało to stworzenia warunków polityczno-społecznych, a także duchownych i wielkiej tolerancji, gościnności w stosunku do obcych, braku uprzedzeń i przesądów religijnych i rasowych."

[254] "Lwów był pod względem politycznym twierdzą, która przez wieki broniła wrogom wejścia w głąb kraju, zaś pod względem ludnościowym – esencją wielonarodowościowej, wielokulturowej Rzeczypospolitej." Bohdan

true to a certain extent, particularly with respect to seventeenth-century attacks by Russian, Ottoman, and Swedish forces, this is not the image of the city provided in Herbert's 1973 text, as the previous interpretations make clear.[255] In contradistinction to calls for a 'Fortress Europe,' which might be seen as the implication of Urbankowski's reading, the Europe that underlies Herbert's travels is a Europe of the borderlands.

### III. Leaving Behind Central Europe

In fact, at the conclusion of "Wizja Europy," the author argues that the concept of Europe is a valuable one in the face of contemporary political circumstances because of its imprecision and openness to a variety of different associations. According to Herbert, the conception of *Mitteleuropa* has lost its cachet and its ability to speak to a younger generation of thinkers and artists in search of a conception of Europe capable of bridging the gap between the Eastern and Western blocs.[256] A version of this notion of Central Europe would be leveraged around ten years later by the Czechoslovakian author Milan Kundera in an attempt to provide a countermodel to the

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Urbankowski, *Poeta, czyli człowiek zwielokrotniony: Szkice o Zbigniewie Herbercie* [The poet, or the amplified man: Sketches on Zbigniew Herbert] (Radom: Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, 2004), 18.

[255] Such a depiction of Lwów is arguably found in the author's 1982 poem *Raport z oblężonego Miasta* (Report from the besieged City), written shortly after the imposition of martial law in response to the Solidarity movement. However, the "City" of the poem is, by the same token, a universal one, and the poet takes the opportunity to express solidarity with mountain tribes in Afghanistan and Kurdish rebels, among others: "ci których dotknęło nieszczęście są zawsze samotni/ obrońcy Dalajlamy Kurdowie afgańscy górale[.]" ("those afflicted by misfortune are always alone/ the Dalai Lama's defenders Kurds Afghan mountaineers"; *WZ*, 531)

[256] Despite arguing that a particular conception of central Europe could be productively paired with Herbert's work, Lajos Pálfalvi acknowledges that the author himself was not a promoter of the idea, even after Kundera and Miłosz began extolling its virtues. Lajos Pálfavi, "Środkowoeuropejska greckość eseistyki Zbigniewa Herberta" [The Central-European Greekness of Zbigniew Herbert's essay writing], in *Herbert na językach: Współczesna recepcja twórczości Zbigniewa Herberta w Polsce i na świecie* [Herbert in tongues: The contemporary reception of Zbigniew Herbert's work in Poland and around the world], ed. Artur Grabowski, Jacek Kopciński, & Jerzy Snopek (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2010), 127. In her study of the concept of Europe in Herbert's work, Marlene Bainczyk-Crescentini also interprets the author's rejection of *Mitteleuropa* as stemming from the notion's nationalist history and its implicit anti-Russian bias. Marlene Bainczyk-Crescentini, *Zbigniew Herbert und Europa* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 221-231.

Cold War separation of Europe into blocs.[257] Still, the network of Central European writers and influences that Kundera delineates in his essay traces a map of Austria-Hungary with Vienna at its spiritual center and a hard boundary on its eastern flank serving as a cordon sanitaire from Russian influence.[258] Despite his claim that "[i]t would be senseless to draw [the] borders [of Central Europe] exactly," Kundera's relatively expansive list of writers, from Franz Kafka and Robert Musil to Danilo Kiś and Bruno Schulz, offers a bounded range of literary works that leaves out, for instance, the writings of Ukrainian author Ivan Franko, in spite of his origins in the Austrian Empire and his extensive engagement with Polish literature.[259]

In contrast to Kundera's literary map of Central Europe that fails to acknowledge its mapping function, Herbert opts for a more amorphous domain with undefined contours:

> The idea of Europe was always an unstable [*chwiejnym*] and imprecise one for the simple reason that it does not designate a continent encircled by a sea, precisely enclosed in its borders. However, it does awaken certain associations [*skojarzenie*] and – I dare to conjecture – quickens one's heartbeat."[260] (*MD*, 129)

On the face of it, this claim is ambiguous and could certainly be interpreted negatively. The instability and imprecision of Europe as an imagined space has allowed it to operate as a justification for exclusionary practices as well as racist and ethnocentric beliefs. And the accelerated heartbeat Herbert references here seems more aligned with the impassioned Romantic

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[257] Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," trans. Edmund White, *The New York Review of Books* 31, no. 7 (1984), 33-38. Interestingly, the original version of the article, which Kundera wrote in French, was entitled "Un occident kidnappé" (A kidnapped west), potentially leading one to assume that Central Europe actually belongs to the West.

[258] Particularly telling is Kundera's effort to distance the Bohemian-Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke from his Russian "spiritual home" and situate him soundly within a central European, which is to say Habsburgian, context.

[259] Ibid., 35.

[260] "Pojęcie Europy było zawsze pojęciem chwiejnym i nieprecyzyjnym z tej prostej przyczyny, że nie jest to nazwa kontynentu oblanego morzem, dokładnie zamkniętym w swoich granicach. Natomiast budzi określone skojarzenia i – śmiem przypuszczać – przyspiesza bicie serca."

nationalism associated, by some, with Mickiewicz than with the detached irony of Montaigne, which was fundamentally opposed to chauvinism of any kind. Nevertheless, the author appears to present Europe's capacity to excite or inspire as an advantage over against the faded idea of Central Europe, which Herbert identifies here by its German name. Unlike Kundera's *l'Europe centrale*, as it appeared in the French original, Herbert's *Mitteleuropa* reminds readers of the concept's German provenance and its most succinct expression in the 1915 publication *Mitteleuropa* by Friedrich Naumann, who utilized the notion in laying the groundwork for a German "liberal imperialism" meant to "denationalize" adjacent communities, including the Poles.[261] Furthermore, readers familiar with Herbert's other writings, including *Hamlet na granicy milczenia*, will be reminded of the positive associations that the concept of instability (*chwiejność*) awakens in the author's work. As is the case with the moral uncertainty of the Danish prince in the 1952 essay, so is the idea of Europe as Herbert conceives it outfitted with a conceptual inconstancy that renders it antagonistic to the production of closed systems. It preserves within itself a deconstructive kernel capable of dismantling restrictive structures of thought—*zburzyć do fundamentów* ("demolishing to the foundations"), as Herbert puts it in *Hamlet*.

Thus, Herbert's vision of Europe serves more of an un-mapping than a mapping function, so to speak, in that the associations (*skojarzenia*) it draws, or attempts to draw, traverse the ideological and political-geographical fault lines of the Cold War. By reaching for such connections, he initiates what Przemysław Czapliński, writing about the literature of the nineties and the early twenty-first century, calls a "crisis of orientation":

[261] In a text published in 1899, Naumann wrote the following: "Wir scheuen uns gar nicht, Polen, Dänen, Suaheli, Chinesen nach Kräften zu entnationalisieren. […] Was wir aber unter keinen Umständen zulassen wollen, ist die Entnationalisierung des deutschen Volkes." Cited in Gilbert Krebs and Bernard Poloni (eds.), *Volk, Reich und Nation: Texte zur Einheit Deutschlands in Staat, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft 1806-1918* (Asnières: Presses de la Sorbonne, 1994), 221.

> Politicians from the turn of the twenty-first century put too much faith in the self-evident nature of a Polish "return to Europe" and "the presence of Poland in the structures of the European Union." Now, at the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, politicians are speaking about sovereignty, as if this would not call for the devising of a new map. In contrast to these politicians, writers are seeking out ties beyond political agreements and trade deals, and the fundamental question they are posing concerns the possibility of creating connections. […] Literature does not trust platitudes, but rather questions them. It involves readers in the experience of a crisis of orientation, and by establishing new coordinates and putting the map of central Europe into motion it forces us to exercise our geographical imagination.[262]

Czapliński derives his notion of geographical imagination (*geograficzna wyobraźnia*) from Edward Said's conception of imaginative geography as described in *Orientalism*. The former, however, highlights literature's capacity to break with the institutional framework in which it is taught, interpreted, and supported and thereby lends "geographical imagination" a dissenting dimension arguably missing from Said's "imaginative geography."[263] In this regard, his description of literature's productive political-geographical disorientation, as well as its underscoring of the imaginative quality of geography in general, applies quite well to Herbert's travel writings, despite the fact that Czapliński is treating a different epoch.[264] What Czapliński's

[262] "Politycy przełomu XX i XXI wieku zbytnio zawierzyli oczywistości polskiego „powrotu do Europy" i „polskiej obecności w strukturach unijnych", politycy schyłku drugiej dekady XXI wieku mówią o suwerenności, jakby nie wymagało to wymyślenia mapy na nowo. W odróżnieniu od nich pisarze szukają powiązań poza umowami politycznymi i handlowymi, a zasadnicze pytanie, które stawiają […,] dotyczy możliwości stwarzania połączeń. […] Nie zawierza [literatura] oczywistościom, lecz je kwestionuje. Wciąga czytelników w doświadczenie kryzysu orientacji, a ustalając nowe współrzędne i wprawiając w ruch środkowoeuropejską mapę, zmusza naszą geograficzną wyobraźnię do wysiłku." Przemysław Czapliński, *Poruszona mapa: Wyobraźnia geograficzno-kulturowa polskiej literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016), 8.

[263] See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 49–73. Said's insistence that "neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability" resonates with Herbert's ironical play with the terms East and West and his emphasis on the instability (*chwiejność*) of geographical concepts like Europe. Ibid., xvii.

[264] Czapliński has written elsewhere on Herbert's work, focusing particularly on his travel essay collections. See Przemysław Czapliński, "Śmierć, czyli o niedoskonałości" [Death, or on imperfection], in: *Czytanie Herberta* [Reading Herbert], ed. Przemysław Czapliński, Piotr Śliwiński & Ewa Wiegandt (Poznań: Wydawnictwo WiS, 1995), 49-64; idem, "Martwa natura z narodem" [Still life with a nation], in *Herbert na językach: Współczesna recepcja twórczości Zbigniewa Herberta w Polsce i na świecie* [Herbert in tongues: The contemporary reception of Zbigniew Herbert's work in Poland and around the world], ed. Grabowski, Artur, Jacek Kopciński, & Jerzy Snopek (Warsaw: Biblioteka Narodowa, 2010), 38-64.

statements brings to the fore is that the literary establishment of cross-cultural networks, connections, and associations does not necessarily foreclose the possibility for alternative geographies. Instead, it explores the conditions of possibility for the discursive development of geographical regions and, in doing so, draws the reader's attention to the artifice of pre-existing constructions, such as the Cold War separation of Europe into distinct spheres of influence and the division of the European Union into core states and peripheral ones.

Of course, "putting the map of central Europe into motion" has different connotations in the nineteen-sixties than it does in the twenty-first century. As already discussed, Herbert foregoes leveraging the imagined geography of Central Europe due to its loss of significance and its lingering relation to a German imperial project. In another programmatic text entitled "Holy Iona, czyli Kartka z podróży" (Holy Iona, or postcard from a trip), commissioned in 1966 by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk in Cologne and broadcast the same year under the title "Grüssende Lichter," Herbert offers an alternative image to the European crossroads from "Wizja Europy," namely that of a pair of lights "communicating" between two islands in the Scottish Inner Hebrides:

> I returned to the Isle of Mull. After supper the hostess asked me to leave a small lamp in the window facing Holy Iona. Such is the custom. At night the lights from the two islands speak to one another. It is not clear what the future will bring and how long the global conflict [*rozdarcie świata*] will linger. But as long as the lights of this earth will greet each other one night a year, perhaps hope is not entirely buried."[265] (*MD*, 20)

The phrase *rozdarcie świata* constitutes an unambiguous reference to the Cold War bifurcation of the globe, particularly as *rozdarcie* could refer either to a "conflict" or, understood more

[265] "Wróciłem na wyspę Mull. Po kolacji gospodyni prosiła mnie, abym pozostawił małą lampkę w oknie wychodzącym na Holy Iona. Taki jest zwyczaj. Nocą światła obu wysp rozmawiają z sobą. Nie wiadomo, co przyniesie przyszłość i jak długo trwać będzie rozdarcie świata. Ale dopóki w jedną bodaj noc roku światła tej ziemi będą się pozdrawiały, niecała chyba nadzieja jest pogrzebana."

figuratively, a "tear" or "rip," as if the fabric of Europe had been rent by the postwar geopolitical division. The isle of Mull and the island of Iona both lie off the western coast of Scotland, which Herbert visited in 1963 while living in London. The primary purpose of the trip, according to the poet's correspondence with his friend Magdalena Czajkowska,[266] was to visit Hadrian's Wall, the northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire, which Herbert later described in his travel essay *Lekcja Łaciny* (Latin class) as the "bulwark of civilization striving to protect itself against savage, unconquered tribes of barbarians."[267] The visit to Hadrian's Wall therefore places the poet's trip to Holy Iona within the context of a dual border-crossing, not only between the historical bounds of the Roman Empire and the territorial holdings of the Ancient Britons, but also between the islands themselves, a crossing that is explicitly dramatized at several points in the short essay: "Thanks only to the exceptional kindness of the Scottish fishermen—as the hour was late and regular transport by boat had been suspended a few weeks prior—did I reach the island of Mull."[268] (*MD*, 19) The difficulty of the passage is syntactically reflected through the long parenthetical statement separating the aid of the fishermen from its effect.

Considered through the lens of Czapliński's "geographical imagination," one perceives how Herbert's description of the lights greeting each other across the Sea of the Hebrides represents an alternative geography that, in mapping two distinct geographies onto one another, casts the geopolitical status quo in a new light and unveils a communicative channel capable of traversing the Cold War divide. This traversal is both aesthetic and spiritual, represented here by

[266] Andrzej Franaszek, *Pan Cogito*, 37.

[267] "[S]zaniec cywilizacji, która usiłowała się bronić przeciw nie podbitym, dzikim plemionom barbarzyńców." Zbigniew Herbert, "Lekcja Łaciny" [Latin class], in *Labyrint nad morzem* [Labyrinth by the sea] (Warsaw: Zeszyty Literackie, 2000), 170.

[268] "Tylko dzięki wyjątkowej życzliwości szkockich rybaków—jako że pora była późna i regularna żegluga statkiem od paru tygodni zawieszona—dotarłem na wyspę Mull."

a modern statue of the Madonna found within the ancient cloisters of the Iona Abbey with the following inscription in French: "Leo Lipschitz—a Jew faithful to his ancestors' creed—sculpted this Madonna so that people will come to understand one another and the spirit will rule over the earth."[269] (*MD*, 20) The sculptor, whose birth name was Chaim Jakoff Lipschitz but who changed his name to Jacques Lipchitz upon moving to France, was a cubist artist and sculptor of Lithuanian origin. Thus, Herbert's encounter with the Madonna in the Scottish abbey stages yet another entanglement of Eastern and Western cultural influences that is echoed by the other seeming contradictions of the scene: the Italian architecture of the *chiostro* in the Scottish climate; the modern sculpture against the medieval backdrop of the abbey; the French inscription in the Gaelic region; the Jewish sculptor and the Christian iconography. But like the sculpture itself, which Herbert describes as "very modern but not disruptive of the atmosphere" (*bardzo nowoczesna, ale nieburząca nastroju*), these mixtures of disparate traditions are conducive to communication or commingling rather than representing sequestered practices or even antagonistic clashes. In this way, the transborder correspondence symbolized by the two conversing lights find aesthetic and religious equivalents in the dialogues between the various artistic styles and in the confluence of Judaism and Christianity; spatial crossings are, once again, mapped onto art.

One should note here, however, Herbert's failure to explicitly name the historical context and the stakes of Lipchitz's sculpture: the Jewish artist made this sculpture after fleeing Vichy France and finding asylum in the United States. This omission is particularly surprising considering that Herbert is elsewhere eager to identify fellow exiles. The sole reference to Lipchitz's experience of antisemitism, to say nothing of the Shoah and the violence against Jews committed by the Vichy Regime and Nazi Germany, is contained in the following short sentence:

[269] "Leo Lipschitz—Żyd wierny wyznaniu swoich przodków—wyrzeźbił tę Madonnę, aby ludzie porozumieli się między sobą i aby duch zapanował na ziemi."

"And I am grateful to the Jewish artist that he, despite having so many hateful words at hand, mustered up words of reconciliation."[270] (*MD*, 20) Leaving out any mention of the Shoah, the potentially insurmountable obstacles posed by this act of 'reconciliation' in the wake of the murder of around six million Jews are effectively elided, rendering the union of Judaism and Christianity, while by no means effortless, as achievable as the translation of an Italian architectural style into Scottish surroundings. As is made clear in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* and his early poetry collections like *Struna światła* and *Hermes, pies i gwiazda*, Herbert's poetic project should be understood as post-catastrophic, in the sense that it not only attempts to reintegrate various artistic traditions in the face of the Cold War bifurcation of the globe, but also against the backdrop of the Second World War and its lingering effects; the image of Pan Cogito balancing on the stone slab among the ruins of his childhood speaks to this aspect of the author's work. However, as has been noted elsewhere, the Holocaust and specifically anti-Semitic violence was at no point in his career a central preoccupation of Herbert's writing, unlike Czesław Miłosz whose poem *Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto* (A poor Christian looks at the ghetto) explicitly grapples with the differing experiences of Poles and Jews during the German occupation of Warsaw along with the question of Polish complicity.[271] An encounter with the poet Paul Celan in Paris in the nineteen sixties proves particularly illuminating in this regard. As Herbert mentioned in an interview conducted on Polish radio in the late nineties, the authors had a common ground in their respective cities of origin—both Lwów and Czernowitz, as former holdings of the Holy Roman Empire,

[270] "I wdzięczny jestem żydowskiemu artyście, że mając pod ręką tyle słów nienawiści, zdobył się na słowa pojednania."

[271] Czesław Miłosz, "Biedny chrześcijanin patrzy na getto" [A poor Christian looks at the ghetto], in *Wiersze wszystkie* [The collected poems], 2nd ed., 223-3 (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2015). For more on themes of anti-Semitism in Herbert's work and postwar Polish literature more broadly see, e.g., Andrzej Franaszek, *Pan Cogito*, 751-2; and Jan Błoński, *Biedni polacy patrzą na getto* [Poor Poles look at the ghetto] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1994).

belong to a bygone, multi-ethnic Europe. As Herbert states, "Czernowitz [...] was an incubator of geniuses, it was a kind of Lwów, a clash of cultures [...]."[272] But over the course of the interview such likenesses are emphasized over against any potential differences, such that the anti-Semitic remarks of a restaurant owner, as recalled by Herbert, seem to be taken as an occasion to underscore the similarities between two men: "We went to a pizza place, but the owner threw us out, saying, 'This is all because of you Galician Jews' [...]."[273] Despite Herbert's acknowledgement of the distinctions between their modes of writing, the gap between their respective experiences of the catastrophes of the Second World War goes unaddressed.

Still, despite the author's glossing of the Holocaust, "Holy Iona" does not attempt to overlook the exigencies and impediments to communication characteristic of the moment in which it is written. As with "Wizja Europy," the short travel essay foregoes recourse to a dated conception of Central Europe, albeit in a less express manner:

> I don't know why, but for the past few years I have been haunted by the image of an island. Islands do not belong to the landscape of my childhood. I was born in Central Europe, halfway between the Baltic and the Black Sea. The scenery of my youth is the environs of Lwów: ravines and gentle hills overgrown with pines on which the first powdery snow beautifully blossoms. There, the ocean was something unimaginable, and islands carried a whiff of fairytales.[274] (*MD*, 19)

[272] Zbigniew Herbert, "Nieprzemijające światło: O Paulu Celanie" [Unfading light: On Paul Celan], in *Herbert. Studia i dokumenty*, ed. Piotr Kłoczkowski (Warsaw: Oddział Muzeum Literatury im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2008), 281. For more on the biographical and poetological similarities between Celan and Herbert see Aleksander Fiut, "Na granicy milczenia: Herbert – Celan" [On the border of silence: Herbert – Celan], in *Dialog i spór: Zbigniew Herbert a inni poeci i eseiści* [Dialogue and dispute: Zbigniew Herbert and other poets and essayists], ed. Józef Maria Ruszar (Lublin: Gaudium, 2006), 361-375.

[273] "Jednak gdzieś na pizzę weszliśmy, gospodarz wyrzucił nas, powiedział 'To przez was Żydów galicyjskich [wszystko]' […]." Zbigniew Herbert, "Nieprzemijające światło," 285.

[274] "Nie wiem dlatego, ale od paru lat nawiedza mnie obraz wyspy. Wyspy nie należą do krajobrazu mego dzieciństwa. Urodziłem się w środkowej Europie, w połowie drogi między Morzem Bałtyckim a Czarnym. Pejzaż mojej młodości to podlwowskie okolice: jary i łagodne pagórki porośnięte sosną, na której najpiękniej kwitnie pierwszy sypki śnieg. Morze było tam czymś niewyobrażalnym, a wyspy miały posmak baśni."

As opposed to emphasizing the multi-national makeup of his hometown, as he did in "Wizja Europy," Herbert describes his birthplace here as central Europe, a landlocked region located "between" (*między*) two seas. As a land mass separate from the mainland, the island represents a geographical formation radically distinct from the scenery of the author's childhood, not only due to the presence of water, but also because it signifies disconnection as opposed to continuity. The characteristic 'between-ness' of central Europe, and with it the possibility of mediation suggested by the German word *Mitteleuropa*, is lacking in the case of the island. In a sense, the island as a symbolic space recognizes the "tear in the earth" (*rozdarcie świata*) wrought by the Cold War. The poet's haunting by the island geography thus presents itself as a necessary turning away from the map of his childhood and toward a distinctly imaginative space capable of existing in the aesthetic domain, as indicated by the reference to fairytales. The lights communicating between the islands of Mull and Iona thereby take on an even greater symbolic significance, as if standing in for artistic works like Herbert's meant to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western Europe.

**IV. The Barbarian in the Garden**

The two programmatic essays analyzed above provide a clear contemporary historical context for Herbert's 1962 travelogue *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, which, as already indicated, makes no explicit references to the Cold War or the recently established division between eastern and western Europe. Indeed, the very publication of a book dealing exclusively with Western European cultural traditions by a Polish publishing company signals at the very least a symbolic opening toward the West by the post-Thaw Polish government, an openness seemingly difficult to reconcile with the

abrupt cancellation of the journal *Europa* as described above.[275] In comparison to the rigid heteronomy of the Stalin era, the Polish United Workers' Party under the leadership of Gomułka was undoubtedly more tolerant of heterodox viewpoints and more amenable to a diversity of intellectual practices. Nevertheless, as Herbert indicates in his poetry as well as his prose, the reforms instituted by Gomułka's government and its increased open-mindedness to Western culture by no means resulted in an erasure of the partition between the two blocs. As suggested by the opening stanza of his poem *Mona Liza*, published a year before *Barbarzyńca* in the collection *Studium przedmiotu* (Study of the object), a trip to a Western European cultural site calls for the Eastern European traveler to cross over a series of borders more substantial than the national boundaries between states:

> through seven mountainous borders
> barbwire rivers
> and executed forests
> and hanged bridges
> I kept coming –
> through waterfalls of stairs
> whirlpools of sea wings
> and a baroque heaven
> filled with the bubbles of angels
> – to you
> Jerusalem in a frame[276] (*WZ*, 253)

The first four lines of the stanza present the natural world as both irreparably damaged, presumably by the recent history of the Second World War, and made accomplice to the harsh border regimes of the Cold War blocs. Though the collection was published a month before the construction of the Berlin Wall, it would have been difficult for Herbert's contemporaries to not perceive in the

[275] For more on the Polish People's Republic relaxation of relations with the West in the wake of the Thaw, see Andrzej Leon Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski. 1944-1991* [Political history of Poland. 1944-1991] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011), 210-213; 330-334.

[276] "[P]rzez siedem gór granicznych/ kolczaste druty rzek/ i rozstrzelane lasy/ i powieszone mosty szedłem – / przez wodospady schodów/ wiry morskich skrzydeł/ i barokowe niebo/ całe w bąblach aniołów/ – do ciebie/ Jeruzalem w ramach[.]"

image of the *kolczaste druty rzek* ("barbwire rivers") the barbed wire that accompanied the wall in its early stages of construction. However, the second half of the stanza presents the traveler with a different class of obstructions, ones that appear to be associated with the Louvre as an institutional protector of the Western European canon. The *wodospady schodów* ("waterfalls of stairs") likely refers to the iconic stairs in the Escalier Daru, at the top of which rests the Winged Victory of Samothrace, the "sea wings" referenced in the following line. In a sense, the stanza doubles the material borders, themselves already undergirded with historical significance, with a cultural layer of impediments to arrival in the West.

Of course, the painting itself is bordered by a "frame," and this poem will be returned to in discussing Herbert's use of ekphrasis in his travelogues. For the moment, however, it serves as another backdrop for considering the significance of Herbert's journeys to both prominent and lesser-known cultural landmarks in Western Europe in the context of the Cold War. As already noted in the opening section of this chapter, the travels recounted in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* confine themselves largely to Italy and France, and the majority of the artworks described stem from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Nevertheless, though the four-hundred-year timespan from around 1100 to 1500 function as the historical core of the work, the author labors to construct a long temporal continuity that runs from prehistory to the present day. Each period examined contains numerous resonances with other epochs either explicitly or implicitly addressed in the collection. Along similar lines, the geographical nucleus of the travelogue is marked by currents of influence that stretch beyond the traditional bounds of Western Europe, as already noted. Thus, the collection, despite the discontinuous character of its organization as a group of ten independent "sketches," constructs continuums that counter both the—in this case, largely conceptual—spatial partitioning of Europe and the temporal division of history into discrete units that thereby lack the

capacity to provide guidance for the present or future. In spite of the absence of a clear-cut discussion of borders, already in its organizational qualities *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* stages a struggle between separation and affiliation that, considering the radio essays discussed above, bears clear correspondences to the political-geographical circumstances of its moment.[277] It is therefore no coincidence that the first paragraph of the opening sketch "Lascaux," in which the poet-traveler visits the decorated complex of caves that had been discovered only twenty years prior in southwestern France, concerns the deficiencies of official maps: "Lascaux is not visible on any official map. At any rate, you might say that it does not exist in the same sense as London or Radom. In order to find out exactly where it was, I had to consult someone at the Museum of Man in Paris."[278] (*BO*, 7) The qualification of the opening map as an "official" one, with its unambiguous demarcations leaving no room for interpretation, suggests that the author is putting forward a map of his own with his travelogue, one that has its basis not in the abstract political considerations of political geography but in the human. Significantly, the traveler gains his first orientational cues from the Musée de l'Homme, an anthropological museum devoted to gathering an expansive collection of objects from a wide array of periods and cultures in the hopes of providing evidence for the fundamental unity of mankind.[279]

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[277] Piotr Siemaszko also perceives the collection's construction of spatial and temporal continuums as a kind of border-crossing: "The adoption of a specific (a very peculiar, as we shall see) epistemic stance is thus joined with the necessity of transgressing borders: borders in space and time, but also stereotypical beliefs rooted in experience." Piotr Siemaszko, *Zmienność i trwanie*, 17.

[278] "Lascaux nie widnieje na żadnej oficjalnej mapie. Można powiedzieć, że nie istnieje w każdym razie w tym sensie, w jakim istnieje Londyn czy Radom. Trzeba było zasięgnąć języka w paryskim Muzeum Człowieka, aby dowiedzieć się, gdzie to właściwie jest."

[279] The following statement by the museum's founder Paul Rivet made on the occasion of its opening could be taken as a motto for Herbert's travelogue as well: "In creating this title [i.e. Musée de l'Homme], I wanted to indicate that everything that concerns mankind, among its multiple aspects, must and can be placed in the collection. […] Humanity is an indivisible whole, not only in space but also in time." Cited in "Du Musée d'Ethnographie au Musée de l'Homme," Musée de l'Homme, accessed November 14, 2019, http://www.museedelhomme.fr/fr/musee/musee-dethnographie-musee-lhomme-3717. Furthermore, the museum's intention to subject aesthetic and spiritual objects to

Before delving into the individual chapters of the collection, it is worth taking the highly provocative title itself under consideration. The seemingly less fraught of the two terms—garden or *ogród*—already introduces a wide range of productive and contradictory associations, the most obvious of these being the biblical Garden of Eden. As the site of mankind's beginnings in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Eden is connoted as a space of origins, which ties in with Herbert's project in its establishment of a continuum of humanity capable of stretching back to its inception. When paired with the title's first word, however, the presence of the barbarian in the presumably idyllic space of human origins places this continuum under the mark of Cain, to use the author's own formulation, and thereby undermines potentially nostalgic searches for epochs and lands free of the violence of the present. Indeed, Herbert makes it clear quite early in the collection that his engagement with history by no means features a romantic idealization of the past. Even the first traces of prehistory are marked by brutality:

> The skeleton [of paleolithic man] found in Cro-Magnon is similar to the skeleton of contemporary man. Cro-Magnon man probably came from Asia and after the last ice age—which is to say around three hundred or four hundred thousand years before the common era—launched an assault on Europe. He mercilessly exterminated [*wytępił*] the Neanderthals, a species beneath him on the evolutionary ladder, and occupied [*zajął*] his caves and fisheries. The history of mankind began under the sign of Cain.[280] (*BO*, 9)

Needless to say, Herbert does not need to establish the anatomical similarities between paleolithic humans and those of his own day in order for the reader to perceive parallels between the slaughter of the Neanderthals at the hands of the early Homo sapiens and events of the author's recent past.

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sociological analysis also aligns with Herbert's consideration of the non-aesthetic dimension of artworks, an element of his inquiry heavily influenced by Stanisław Ossowski and his sociological analysis of art.

[280] "[S]zkielet [człowieka paleolitycznego] znaleziony w Cro Magnon podobny jest do szkieletu człowieka współczesnego. Cromagnończyk pochodził prawdopodobnie z Azji i po ostatnim zlodowaceniu, czyli około trzydziestu do czterdziestu tysięcy lat przed naszą erą, rozpoczął szturm na Europę. Wytępił bezlitośnie niżej stojącego na drabinie gatunków człowieka neandertalskiego, zajął jego jaskinie i łowiska. Historia ludzkości rozpoczęła się pod gwiazdą Kaina."

Following the Second World War, words like *szturm* (derived from the German *Sturm*), *wytępić* ("exterminate"), and *zająć* ("occupy") had very concrete meanings for Herbert's Polish readers; alongside these anachronistic terms, the reference to a "ladder of species" (*drabina gatunków*) loads this description of prehistory with contemporary resonances.[281]

Furthermore, the Polish word *ogród* ("garden") is easily linking to a discussion of borders and boundaries owing to its etymology: *ogród* is derived from the Proto-Slavic *o(b)gordъ*, meaning an enclosed area. Indeed, the Polish verb *ogrodzić* refers to the activity of surrounding terrain with a fence, net, wall, or other means of barring entry or exit.[282] In light of this connotation of the word *ogród*, one could imagine that the presence of a *barbarzyńca* in such an enclosed space might speak to the opening of or even the violent intrusion into such a domain by one who was initially not granted access. The "barbarian in the garden" could thereby signify a kind of opportunity or democratization, in the sense that a previously exclusive domain, be it concrete or abstract, has been made accessible to a larger group. Taken figuratively, this encroachment of an intruder onto formerly hallowed ground can be perceived in Herbert's leveraging of the position of the amateur in the scholarly field of art history, as described in the collection's preface: "I am not an expert but rather an amateur, and I have foregone all of the charms of erudition: a bibliography, footnotes, indexes."[283] (*BO*, 5) Though the numerous art historical—as well as

[281] Despite the supposed birthplace of Homo sapiens in Asia and the subsequent 'storming' of the West from the East, one cannot draw a simple one-to-one correspondence between Cro-Magnon man and the Soviet Union, as the mention of an evolutionary ladder and the word *wytępić* clearly signal the language of the Nazis. In a letter to his German translator Karl Dedecius from 1963, Herbert expressed his deep interest in "the history of exterminated peoples" (*dzieje narodów wytępionych*) in justifying his research into ancient Celtic tribes. Cited in Andrzej Franaszek, *Pan Cogito*, 38.

[282] *Wielki słownik języka polskiego*, s.v. "ogrodzić," accessed November 15, 2019, https://www.wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=2972&ind=0&w_szukaj=ogrodzi%C4%87.

[283] "[N]ie jestem fachowcem, ale amatorem, zrezygnowałem ze wszystkich uroków erudycji: bibliografii, przypisów, indeksów."

historical—excursuses strewn throughout Herbert's travelogues are thoroughly researched and approached with a methodological rigor that casts this self-designation as a dilettante into doubt, the role of the dabbler that Herbert adopts allows him to deconstruct the rigid systems that he associates with academic discourse. For instance, when describing the intermingling of Doric and Ionian features in the Temple of Demeter in Paestum, the poet draws attention to the reduction of difference that characterizes academic engagements with works of art, implicitly offering his own presumably amateurish faithfulness to reality as an alternative: "But pure architectonic orders occur with immeasurable infrequency (outside of textbooks). [...] In reality and in practice, there were numerous contaminations. And antagonisms were less emphasized than classifiers had wished."[284] (*BO*, 28) Furthermore, this eschewal of an academically pure inquiry into works of art enables him to engage more intensively with the sociological and political effects of cultural objects in a manner that both rejects orthodox conceptions of aesthetic autonomy and sidesteps a party-line version of historical materialism, as practiced at the time by influential academics like Tadeusz Kroński.

Nevertheless, this is not to say that Herbert's project is one that advocates all forms of engagement with the plastic arts or sites of cultural significance. Indeed, his ideal mode of encounter, as demonstrated by the narrator's own ekphrastic confrontations with art throughout the collection, is an individual one. He admittedly has no patience for the twentieth-century phenomenon of mass tourism, and for two primary reasons. Firstly, as he indicates in an ironic description of a tour guide in the caves of Lascaux, he considers it a restriction of the individual traveler's intellectual autonomy, in a manner reminiscent of religious dogma or military orders:

[284] "Ale czyste porządki architektoniczne zdarzają się (poza podręcznikami) niezmiernie rzadko. […] W rzeczywistości i w praktyce istniały liczne kontaminacje i przeciwieństwa były mnie akcentowane, niżby życzyli sobie klasyfikatorzy."

"And there is also the voice of the tour guide stammering explanations. It is the voice of a sergeant reading the Holy Scriptures."[285] (*BO*, 8) Secondly, and relatedly, Herbert perceives it as antithetical to the education in sophisticated consumption that he seems intent on imparting to the reader. This education is yet another aspect of the collection that speaks to its status as a post-Thaw cultural product. Since the Polish government increased living wages and expanded consumer-oriented policies in response to worker protests in Poznań in 1956, *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* represents an attempt to school the Polish consumer, newly exposed to the reestablished private trade sector, in practices of consumption that are neither exclusively utilitarian nor hedonistic.[286] Such training can best be observed in a scene in which the narrator of the travelogues carefully enumerates the steps of his ingestion of a glass of chianti while dining in Siena:

> One must tilt the glass in order to observe how the fluid flows around it and to see whether it leaves traces [*ślady*]. Then the glass is raised to eye-level and, in the words of a certain French gourmand, one sinks one's eyes into its vibrant rubies and contemplates it like a Chinese sea full of corals and algae. The third gesture – bring the edge of the glass to one's lower lip and breathe in the fragrance of *mammola* – a bouquet of violets intimating to the nostrils that the chianti is good. Then, one inhales into the depths of one's lungs until one is filled with the aroma of ripe grapes and earth. Finally – though without barbaric [*barbarzyńskiego*] haste – one takes a small sip and, with the tongue, rubs the dark, suede-like taste into one's palette.[287] (*BO*, 94)

The methodical handling of the chianti and the highly suggestive vocabulary intimate similarities between his method of wine consumption and that of his larger project. The *ślady* ("traces") left

[285] "I do tego głos przewodnika dukającego objaśnienia. Jest to głos sierżanta, który czyta Pismo Święte."

[286] Małgorzata Mazurek, "Moralities of Consumption in Poland across the Short Twentieth Century," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* (2013), 408.

[287] "Należy nachylić szklankę, aby zobaczyć, jak płyn spływa po szkle, czy nie zostawia śladów. Następnie podnosi się ją do oczu i, jak mówi pewien francuski smakosz, zatapia się oczy w żywych rubinach i kontempluje się jak chińskie morze pełne korali i alg. Trzeci gest – zbliżyć brzeg szklanki do dolnej wargi i wdychać zapach mammola – bukietu fiołków oznajmiających nozdrzom, że chianti jest dobre. Zaciągnąć się tym aż do dna płuc tak, żeby mieć w sobie woń dojrzałych winogron i ziemi. Wreszcie – ale unikając barbarzyńskiego pośpiechu – wziąć w usta mały łyk i językiem rozetrzeć ciemny, zamszowy smak na podniebieniu."

behind by the wine bring to mind the remains of the Roman amphitheater described in the travel essay on Arles, among other sites of cultural and historical significance. The traveler's careful, multistep engagement with a given object of consumption, be it wine, a painting, or a work of architecture, is contrasted with the carelessness of a less refined consumer, referred to here unironically as a "barbarian." Despite the fact that Herbert's programmatic amateurism opens the field of art-historical analysis to non-experts, these non-experts must nonetheless act in accordance with certain standards of taste.

As the preceding considerations have already indicated, the more operative word in the title is *barbarzyńca*, a key concept in the author's work over which a great deal of ink has been spilled.[288] The term itself originated with the ancient Greeks and was initially nothing more than a designation for foreigners, though over time it garnered increasingly negative connotations, with "barbarism" ultimately being perceived as the antithesis of civilization and order.[289] However, Herbert's use of the word is in line with that of Montaigne, who problematized this dichotomy and addressed the chauvinistic function of the term in his essay "Of Cannibals," which discusses European prejudices toward the indigenous tribes of "the New World" (in this case coastal Brazil):

> Now, to return to my argument, I do not believe, from what I have been told about this people, that there is anything barbarous or savage about them, except that we all call barbarous anything that is contrary to our own habits. Indeed we seem to have no other

[288] See, e.g., Stanisław Barańczak, *Uciekinier z utopii*, 30-33; Roman Zimand, "Ogród i barbarzyńca" [The garden and the barbarian], in *Czas normalizacji*. *Szkice czwarte* [The time of normalization: Four sketches] (London: Aneks, 1989), 55-61.

[289] In his essay "Des cannibales," Montaigne notes the dual meaning of the Greek word for "barbarism" as it was used in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, citing as he does Pyrrhus' description of the orderly Roman armies in Southern Italy: "'I do not know,' [Pyrrhus] says, 'what kind of barbarians these are (for such was what the Greeks called all foreign nations) but the arrangement [*disposition*] of this army before me is not at all barbaric.'" Michel de Montaigne. *Des cannibales*, ed. Christine Bénévent (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2008), 11. For more on the development of this term out of its Greek origins, see Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 41-64.

> criterion of truth and reason than the type and kind of opinions and customs current in the land where we live.[290]

Admittedly, Herbert does not make such an explicit assertion of cultural relativism, but his employment of the term tracks its displacement over the centuries, thereby demonstrating Montaigne's point. In "U Dorów" (Among the Dorians), for instance, the second sketch in the collection, the author provides historical context for the construction of the Temple of Athena, describing the conquering and colonization of Southern Italy by the ancient Greeks: "However, these lands were not a no-man's land. The Greeks won [*zdobywali*] them from the barbarians by sleight of hand or by force, with less cruelty than the Romans (those Prussians of the ancient world) [*Prusacy-Rzymianie*], though not without bloodshed." (*CP*, 16)[291] The label of *barbarzyńca* is applied here to the ancient inhabitants of the Apennine Peninsula, whose land was stolen by Greek invaders sometime between the eighth and sixth centuries B.C.E. Nevertheless, Herbert's adoption of the designation from its Greek usage does not signal his identification with the invaders. On the contrary, this short citation alone demonstrates the uselessness of the term *barbarzyńca* as a universal moral category, as the Greek colonizers are the ones acting barbarically. In the subsequent sketch "Arles," the descriptor is given to the raiders (likely Muslim Saracens) that attacked the Roman fortifications at Arles in the Early Middle Ages: "The amphitheater's walls were so thick that during the barbarian raids the construction was turned into a fortress."[292] (*CP*, 30) Once again, the term is employed from the perspective of a major ruling power and colonizer, though the referents on either side of the designation have changed. In both instances, *barbarzyńca*

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[290] Michel de Montaigne, "Of Cannibals," *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. J.M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1993), 108-9.

[291] "Jak się rzekło, ziemie te nie były niczyje. Zdobywali je Grecy na barbarzyńcach podstępem albo siłą, nie tak okrutnie jak ci Prusacy-Rzymianie, nie obeszło się jednak bez przemocy." (*BO*, 23)

[292] "Mury amfiteatru były tak potężne, że w czasach najazdu barbarzyńców zamieniono je na fortece." (*BO*, 42)

is leveraged in order to mark a distinction between self and other, to erect a symbolic barrier around one community to the exclusion of another.

Nevertheless, Herbert affirms the traditional dichotomy between civilized Roman and barbaric foreigner only to upend it a few paragraphs later in his characterization of the invasion of the Visigoths and the ensuing centuries. Despite the conquering of the city by the Visigoths, a collection of northern tribes traditionally perceived as 'barbarian,' Arles did not relinquish one bit of its former grandeur. Indeed, what finally brought cultural decay to the medieval city was not the Goths but the Catholics: "The apogee of barbarism came in the seventh and eighth centuries. The power of the Roman provincial governors was taken over by the bishops and archbishops [...]. Roman temples simply became the sanctuaries of a new creed. The Mother of Christ moves into Diana's house."[293] (*CP*, 31) The replacement of Diana by Mary reinforces the long line of continuity that Herbert wishes to trace from prehistory to the present. Still, this historical development does not follow a straightforward, Hegelian model of progress, as the ousting of the Roman deities by the Christian God is the first in a series of events that culminates in the city's eventual cultural decline. Moreover, it almost goes without saying that the classification of the Christians as the bearers of 'barbarism' runs contrary to traditional historical narratives, in which Christendom, like the Roman Empire before it, represents a civilizing force throughout Europe as well as beyond it. Yet as with the Greeks and the Romans, whom the author does not hesitate to depict as brutal colonizers, Herbert reveals the presumably redemptive conversion tactics of the medieval Catholic Church to be little more than tools of oppression. The sketch "O albigensach, inkwizytorach i trubadurach" ("Albigensians, Inquisitors, and Troubadours"), which breaks with

[293] "Apogeum barbarzyństwa przypada na wiek VII i VIII. Władzę rzymskich namiestników prowincji przejmują biskupi i arcybiskupi […]. Miejscem nowego kultu stały się po prostu świątynie rzymskie. Do domy Diany wprowadzono Matkę Chrystusa." (*BO*, 43)

the art historical focus of the previous chapters, describes the origins of the Inquisition in the thirteenth century in the southern French region of Languedoc, when a large community of adherents to a dualist Christian sect known as Catharism were attacked in a crusade launched by Pope Innocent III and then systematically persecuted after the region's subjugation. Partway through his portrayal, Herbert cites the neutral King of Aragon Peter II, who tried to appeal to the Pope by arguing that, "[T]he war against the heretics has changed into a barbarian conquest and the colonization of a Christian country."[294] (*BO*, 137) An analogy between the Albigensian Crusades of Pope Innocent's Catholic Church, the violent expansion of Archaic Greece into so-called Magna Graecia, and the Roman colonization of Southern France is intimated in this one short sentence. However, unlike the portrayal of the Greek and Roman exploits, the Catholic Church's subjugation of Provence is characterized as 'barbarian,' thereby inverting its orthodox usage and rendering the conceptual partition between civilization and barbarism porous. In effect, Herbert's portrait of the Catholic Church during the Albigensian Crusade, as well as in the subsequent chapter on the Knights Templar, moves it across this partition. To put it differently, the symbolic border erected by the term *barbarzyńca* is not as steadfast as it may initially have appeared.

As already indicated, the long historical continuum that begins in prehistory does not stop in the Middle Ages. Herbert's previously-cited description of the Roman Empire as "Prusso-Romans" (*Prusacy-Rzymianie*) highlights the similarities between the aggressive imperialism of the Roman Empire (along with the Ancient Greeks and the Catholic Church) and the Kingdom of Prussia's eastward expansion after the three military partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century. In light of this resemblance, one can perceive a clear parallel between the persecuted and

[294] "Wojna przeciwko heretykom zamieniła się w barbarzyński podbój i kolonizację chrześcijańskiego kraju."

displaced 'barbarians' described in the various (art) historical sketches and the Poles themselves, whom Herbert ironically characterizes elsewhere in the collection as a "restless people that history has already somewhat excessively coaxed into dislocation."[295] (*BO*, 199) In fact, the sketch "U Dorów" contains a hint at the affiliation between the Poles and the 'barbarians' of Southern Italy that fled the coast after its capture by the ancient Greeks: "The autochthonous population fled into the mountains and observed the fat city of conquerors with disdain. Cicero evocatively claims that the Greek coastline is like a trail stitched into a broad fabric of barbarian fields [*pól barbarzyńskich*]."[296] (*BO*, 23) Considering the shared fate of the barbarians and the Poles as displaced peoples, the phrase "barbarian fields" appears loaded; indeed, the word *Polanie* ("Poles") is derived from *pole* ("field"). Moreover, Herbert's 'barbarian' need not be a stand-in for the Polish nation alone; the figure of the barbarian can be interpreted as representative of Eastern Europe as a whole. And the numerous references to an East-West binary found throughout the collection provide support for this reading, despite the lack of any explicit mention of 'Eastern Europe' as a political-geographical entity.[297] In light of this interpretation of the word *barbarzyńca*, the title of Herbert's collection could be read as a reference to the Eastern European's trip to the

[295] "[…] Polacy, naród przecież ruchliwy, a już przez historię nie przesadnie zachęcany do dyslokacji […]." Herbert elsewhere draws a more specific, highly suggestive comparison between the colonized peoples of Arles and his own Galician grandparents: "The cult of the good emperor Augustus, of whom people speak as warmly as my Galician grandparents did of Franz Joseph, is alive to this day on the banks of the Rhône." (*BO*, 40; "Do dziś żywy jest nad brzegami Rodanu kult dobrego cesarza Augusta, o którym ludzie mówią tak ciepło jak moi galicyjscy dziadkowie o Franciszku Józefie.")

[296] "Ludność tubylcza uchodziła w góry i z nienawiścią obserwowała tłuste miasto zdobywców. Cicero mówi obrazowo, że brzeg grecki stanowi jakby szlak przyszyty do szerokiej tkaniny pól barbarzyńskich." Unfortunately, the English translation of this text found in Herbert's *Collected Prose* mistranslates this final phrase as "the broad cloth of semi-barbarians" [*szerokiej tkaniny pół-barbarzyńców*], thereby missing the implicit reference to *Polanie* ('Poles'), derived as it is from the Polish word for 'field' [*pole*]. (*CP*, 16)

[297] From an historical perspective, Larry Wolf highlights the common portrayal of Slavic peoples in French and German Enlightenment-era travelogues as "demi-savages," which he interprets as a Western European tactic to solidify its status as the epitome of 'civilization' over against its easterly neighbors. Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 17-25.

'garden' of Western European civilization in a manner that accentuates the transgressive character of this voyage.[298] Though Herbert does not explicitly state this at any point in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, his extended engagement with these European cultural sites, which undoes their status as markers of an exclusively 'Western' cultural heritage, is already an act that runs counter to the prevailing geopolitical order of his moment.

**V. (Dis-)Inheriting/ (Dis-)Possessing the West**

Yet another connection between Poland, newly removed from its former imagined political-geographical location in Central Europe, and the 'barbarians' portrayed in the various sketches of his travelogue can be found in Herbert's conception of disinheritance (*wydziedziczenie*), a central theme of his work. Stanisław Barańczak analyzes this concept and its relation to barbarism in his reading of the poem *Wawel* from Herbert's first collection *Struna światła* (String of light).[299] As Barańczak elucidates, the poem obliquely critiques the symbolist drama *Akropolis* by Stanisław Wyspiański, a play in which Kraków's Wawel Castle is transmogrified into a replica of the Greek acropolis on the eve of the Resurrection, thereby mediating between presumably Western principles of symmetry and chaotic Eastern "barbarism":

> He who likened you to a marble edifice
> surely had a patriotic cataract in his eye
>
> [...]
>
> maybe only at night in a fever
> in a frenzy of woe a barbarian
> who from crosses and gallows
> learned how mass is balanced

[298] As Roman Zimand remarks, upon the collection's publication reviewers read the titular 'garden' as a cipher for Mediterranean culture specifically. Roman Zimand, "Ogród i barbarzyńca," 59.

[299] Stanisław Barańczak, *Uciekinier z utopii*, 31-33. See also Roman Zimand, "Ogród i barbarzyńca," 58-9.

and maybe only under a moon
when the angels leave the altar
to ride roughshod over dreams

and only then
—an Acropolis

An Acropolis for the dispossessed
and mercy mercy for those who lie[300]

Though Barańczak's interpretation suggests the poem's juxtaposition of the Mediterranean culture embodied in the Acropolis and the 'barbarism' of Eastern Europe, there is no explicit mention of an East-West dichotomy here. In fact, *Wawel* appears to hint at an even older division between Northern and Southern Europe, one that would remain influential in Polish culture until the late nineteenth century. But quite to the contrary of Piotr Siemaszko, who disputes Barańczak's and others' insistence on the significance of the Cold War separation between East and West in Herbert's work,[301] the poem's reference to the "disinherited" (*wydziedziczonych*) clearly evokes the postwar disconnection of the Polish People's Republic from Western Europe. Thus, *Wawel*, like "Wizja Europy," simultaneously conjures two distinct imagined geographies, thereby denaturalizing both and drawing them into question.

Nevertheless, as the poem also indicates in a manner similar to *Mona Liza*, neither of these symbolic demarcations—be it between North and South or East and West—is easily transgressed. The many unlikely conditions potentially necessary for the successful recreation of the Greek

[300] Zbigniew Herbert, *The Collected Poems: 1956-1998,* tr. & ed. Alissa Valles (HarperCollins e-books, 2010), 91-92. "Patriotyczną kataraktę na oczach miał ten/ co cię zrównał z gmachem marmurów// […] i tylko może w noc w gorączce/ w obłędzie żalu barbarzyńca/ co się od krzyżów i szubienic/ dowiedział równowagi brył// i tylko może pod księżycem/ kiedy anioły od ołtarza/ odchodzą by tratować sny// i tylko wtedy/ —Akropolis// Akropol dla wydziedziczonych/ i łaska łaska dla kłamiących" (*WZ*, 59)

[301] Piotr Siemaszko, *Zmienność i trwanie*, 25.

Acropolis in the Polish castle, as marked by the repetition of the phrase *i tylko* (*może*), suggest its (near-)impossibility. At the very least, the Polish Acropolis can only appear to "those who lie" with "patriotic cataract(s)," and only in a moonlit state of remorseful insanity that arguably leaves little hope of the actualization of this imagined unity in reality. And the accomplishment of the task, just like the arrival of the traveler in *Mona Liza*, is concealed from the reader by a dash: though the "barbarian" subject is identified, the act of the Acropolis' creation is elided, making it appear all the more miraculous and out of the subject's control. The action of the poem is, however, incited by the *zrównanie* of the Wawel Castle and the Acropolis carried out by the unnamed figure with a "patriotic cataract," a likely reference to Wyspiański. The verb *zrównać* can be understood not only as a comparison between two things, but also more radically as the elimination of the differences between them;[302] in this way, it is akin to Johnson's employment of the *Vergleich* as described in the first chapter of this dissertation. Unlike the German verb *vergleichen*, however, *zrównać* can also refer to the levelling or flattening of terrain, the removal of potential obstructions that is potentially productive or destructive depending on the context. Within the context of this poem, the word retains both connotations: the comparison produces the idea of a Polish Acropolis that might someday appear to "the disinherited," but the cataractous "barbarian" also loses sight of the object of observation in likening it to a dissimilar object. In constructing a continuum between the Polish castle and the Athenian Acropolis, the poet runs the risk of levelling both.

This risk is, of course, Herbert's as well. As already stated, the tracing of an expansive cultural heritage capable of connecting not only Eastern and Western Europe, but all of the diverse communities that have existed throughout history, is one of the ambitious objectives of

[302] *Wielki słownik języka polskiego*, s.v. "zrównać," accessed December 3, 2019, https://www.wsjp.pl/index.php?id_hasla=29581&id_znaczenia=2823377&l=29&ind=0.

*Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*. At the end of the collection's opening sketch "Lascaux," a highly suggestive passage describing the traveler's emergence from the recently discovered caves and his departure in the direction of the cultural landmarks described subsequently in the collection affirms the existence of a long line of continuity capable of binding together these various sites:

> I returned from Lascaux by the same road I arrived. Though I had stared into what some call the abyss of history, I did not feel I was returning from another world. Never before had I felt a stronger or more reassuring conviction: I am a citizen of the earth, an inheritor [*dziedzicem*] not only of the Greeks and Romans but of almost the whole of infinity. This is precisely human pride and a faith cast into the vastness of the heavens, space, and time: "Poor bodies that perish without a trace [*bez śladu*], let humanity be nothing to you; from the earth with its traces [*ślady*] of the Aurignacian half-beast and traces of vanished kingdoms, feeble hands dig up [*wydobywają*] images which, whether evoking indifference or understanding, testify equally to your dignity. No greatness can be separated from its support. The rest are passive creatures and thoughtless worms." The road opened to the Greek temples and Gothic stained glass. I walked towards them feeling the warm touch [*dotyk*] of the Lascaux painter on my palm. (*CP*, 13)[303]

Despite others' insistence that the expanse between modernity and the Paleolithic Era constitutes an untraversable "abyss," Herbert offsets this metaphor with the image of the *droga* ("path" or "road") that extends from the Lascaux caves to the Gothic cathedrals of Chartres, discussed in the sketch "Kamień z katedry" (A stone from the cathedral). It is, of course, not only a spatial continuum, but a temporal one as well, stretching from prehistory to the author's postwar moment. Historical and geographical borders are effaced in the construction of an unbounded expanse. However, the traveler's assertion that he is an inheritor of "nearly" (*prawie*) infinity insinuates that

[303] "Wracałem z Lascaux tą samą drogą, jaką przybyłem. Mimo że spojrzałem, jak to się mówi, w przepaść historii, nie miałem wcale uczucia, że wracam z innego świata. Nigdy jeszcze nie utwierdziłem się mocniej w kojącej pewności; jestem obywatelem Ziemi, dziedzicem nie tylko Greków i Rzymian, ale prawie nieskończoności. To jest właśnie ludzka duma i wyzwanie rzucone obszarom nieba, przestrzeni i czasu. „Biedne ciała, które mijacie bez śladu, niech ludzkość będzie dla was nicością; słabe ręce wydobywają z ziemi noszącej ślady oryniackiej półbestii i ślady zagłady królestw – obrazy, które budząc obojętność czy zrozumienie, jednako świadczą o waszej godności. Żadna wielkość nie da się oddzielić od tego, co ją podtrzymuje. Reszta to uległe stwory i bezrozumne owady". Droga była otwarta ku świątyniom greckim i gotyckim witrażom. Szedłem ku nim, czując w dłoni ciepły dotyk malarza z Lascaux." (*BO*, 19-20)

there are at least some cultures that have perhaps already vanished irretrievably, an implication that augments the importance and urgency of the author's project.

The poet-traveler's identification of himself as an "heir" (*dziedzic*) of Greco-Roman culture, as well as of human history in its (near) entirety, arises out of the act of digging, of excavating traces (*ślady*). Key to this practice, repeated throughout the collection in Herbert's various encounters with paintings, buildings, and sculptures, is the activity of coming into contact with the site or cultural object in question in the most immediate way possible, employing a method of observation that engages all the senses. With respect to this sensuous mode of contemplation, the sense of touch (*dotyk*) is arguably more significant than that of vision, which is why the lingering physical impression of the Lascaux painter on the traveler's hands weighs heavier in his ascertaining of historical continuity than the visual perception of history's "abyss." Moreover, the process of unearthing images, depicted in the passage's second paragraph, once again makes reference to hands, as if suggesting that these images are not only or even primarily visual, but rather objects and environments that must be touched, smelled, and heard. As described here, this process seeks to uncover "images" (*obrazy*) testifying to communities and individuals that have passed away without leaving behind clear indicators of their existence. The reference to the "poor bodies" of those who have disappeared highlights the centrality of lived experience as one of the objects of Herbert's hermeneutical project. As already indicated, works of art and architecture are not treated autonomously, but rather as a privileged means of accessing the communities and epochs behind these works. And as the poet intimates in this passage, this operation is by no means an effortless one, particularly since the only available tools are "weak hands" (*słabe ręce*). In fact, *wydobywać*, the verb used to describe this excavation process, shares a root with *zdobywać*, the word that Herbert uses elsewhere to depict both the conquest of foreign territory and his own

method of realism that attempts to reach the reality located beyond the work of art, as discussed in his explication of *Dlaczego klasycy*. The excavation portrayed here is thus another border-crossing technique, one that, in this case, does not reach toward a seemingly ungraspable contemporary reality, but rather toward what Herbert describes in the collection's preface as "distant civilizations" (*odległe cywilizacje*). (*BO*, 5)

As a method of leveling divisions and thereby establishing both a lateral (i.e. geographical) and a vertical (i.e. historical) continuum, this process of excavation—or *śledzić* as the author terms it in "Wizja Europy"—manifests itself in Herbert's engagement with works of art as well as with historical incidents. This method is put on particularly clear display in the chapter "Siena," in which the author, alongside a thorough chronicling of the city's conflict-ridden history, discusses the works of the Medieval painters Duccio di Buoninsegna and Giotto di Bondone. After giving a brief overview of the scholarship on the two Italian "masters," in which Giotto, as a precursor of the Renaissance, is given the more favorable treatment, Herbert attempts to level the playing field between the two men. With regard to Giotto, the Polish poet argues that this trailblazer should also be recognized as a historical marker for the loss of a formerly vibrant set of connections between European and Asian cultural traditions. Duccio's work, on the other hand, testifies to the artist's rare ability to combine various stylistic strands and traditions in a manner that is not oriented toward 'progress,' like Giotto, but rather toward redemption, prefiguring Herbert's own salvage work:

> Duccio did not belong to the category of artists who make spectacular discoveries. He was one of those who produce new syntheses. [...] More recent scholars justly noted that the work of the great Sienese artist brought about the synthesis of two prominent, antithetical cultures: on the one hand, Byzantine neo-Hellenism with its hierarchies and anti-naturalism; and on the other, the Western European—specifically French—Gothic, with its exaltation, naturalism, and inclination towards drama. Giotto paves the road for the resurrected heritage [*dziedzictwu*] of the Romans, who after all did not make great contributions to the world of aesthetics. [...] The European painting that came after him—

> though no one seems to say this openly—loses contact with the immense, petrified cultural spheres of Europe and Asia. It becomes a great, but local, adventure, unleashing the monster of naturalism. The connection with the great rivers of humanity, the Nile, Tigris, and Euphrates, is broken. Though obviously fascinated by the miniatures of the Paris School, Duccio returns inward [*cofa się w głąb*], to the roots [*korzeni*] of culture. Unlike Giotto, he is not a discoverer of new lands but an explorer of sunken islands. (*CP*, 57-8)[304]

This passage signals a good deal of the motifs that Herbert will later discuss in greater depth in "Wizja Europy" and "Holy Iona," where he places them in indisputable relation to the political-geographical situation of his day. Byzantium is by no means equated with Eastern Europe here, but the combination of two seemingly antagonist cultures in Duccio's paintings certainly seems akin to the "East-West dialogue" that the author will later identify as one of the primary purposes of his travels. Indeed, the synthesis of Byzantine and Western European (particularly Gothic) elements in Duccio's work prefigures Herbert's characterization of Lwów and its intermingling of these specific traditions in *Wizja Europy*.

Furthermore, the labor of rediscovery attributed to Duccio in his characterization as an "explorer of sunken islands" is repeated by Herbert in his restoration of Duccio's status as a medieval master. In a sense, Herbert has inherited this redemptive operation from the very Italian painter he is redeeming. And the traveler's opening descent into the Lascaux caves is echoed in this description of Duccio's "retreat into the depths" (*cofa się w głąb*), which the latter enacts in uniting the ostensibly contradictory cultures of Asia and Europe. To highlight further consonances between the activities ascribed to Duccio in this passage and Herbert's own project, the sketch

[304] "Duccio nie należał do artystów, którzy dokonują błyskotliwych odkryć. Ich rola polega na tworzeniu nowych syntez. […] Jak słusznie podkreślili nowsi badacze, w dziełach wielkiego sieneńczyka dokonała się synteza dwu wielkich i przeciwstawnych kultur, z jednej strony, neohellenizmu bizantyńskiego z całą jego hieratycznością i antynaturalizmem, a z drugiej, zachodnioeuropejskiego, ściśle: francuskiego, gotyku z jego egzaltacją, naturalizmem i skłonnością do dramatu. Giotto otwiera drogę odradzającemu się dziedzictwu Rzymian, którzy przecież nie wnieśli do sztuki wielkich wartości. […] Malarstwo europejskie – nikt zdaje się tego głośno nie powiedział – które idzie za nim, traci związek z olbrzymimi obszarami zamarłych kultur Europy i Azji, staje się wielką, ale lokalną przygodą. Wyzwala potwora naturalizmu. Zerwany zostaje związek z wielkimi rzekami ludzkości: Nilem, Eufratem, Tygrysem. Duccio, chociaż niewątpliwie oczarowany miniaturami szkoły paryskiej, cofa się w głąb, do korzeni kultur. Nie jest, jak Giotto, odkrywcą nowych lądów, ale eksploratorem zatopionych wysp." (*BO*, 75)

"Lascaux" opens with a suggestive reference to roots (*korzenie*) and the animals that sniff out the truffles that the poet claims "belong to the history of human insanities, and thus to art history": "[A truffle] is a kind of underground fungus that sponges off the roots [*korzeniach*] of the various plants from which it draws sap. In order to detect it, one must use dogs or piglets, which are known for their excellent sense of smell."[305] (*BO*, 7) It is no coincidence that this ostensibly trivial description of truffles is found at the very beginning of the collection. As already indicated, *Barbaryzńca w ogrodzie* is replete with analogies, and this portrayal of truffle-sniffing pigs and dogs is clearly meant to serve as an analogy for the author's travels and art-historical analyses, which constitute an attempt to unearth the underground networks that connect artistic traditions that might seem entirely unrelated from a more superficial vantage. In this regard, however, Herbert's process arguably more closely resembles the pursuit of the truffle pigs than it does Duccio's descent into the "roots of culture," as the substrate that binds together the various cultures and individual artists addressed in Herbert's collection is more complex than a typical root system, at least as it is conventionally understood.[306] In fact, the author's description of the entangled fungi and roots calls to mind contemporary research on mycorrhizal networks, which demonstrates that root systems and fungi combine to create an underground network of carbon transfers and other exchanges.[307] The network of influences binding together seemingly distinct cultures and

[305] "Trufle należą do historii ludzkich szaleństw, a zatem do historii sztuki. [...] Jest to rodzaj grzyba podziemnego, pasożytującego na korzeniach innych roślin, z których czerpie soki. Do wykrywania go używa się psów lub prosiaków odznaczających się, jak wiadomo, doskonałym węchem."

[306] Even Deleuze and Guattari's description of the "radicle-system" in their introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus* does not do justice to the combination of roots and fungi that one finds in *Barbarzyńca*. Nevertheless, particularly in its insistence on an overarching identity capable of encompassing the (near) entirety of human history and prehistory, Herbert's work is still not akin to Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the "rhizome" in its radical multiplicity. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, "Introduction: Rhizome," In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3-25.

[307] Ed Yong, "The Wood Wide Web," *The Atlantic*, April 14, 2016, https://wwww.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/04/the-wood-wide-web/478224/.

traditions in Herbert's portrayal not only extends not only vertically into the past, but also horizontally across space; the author's description of the Orvieto cathedral as a typical work of Italian gothic architecture provides an example for the transformative migration of artistic styles across regions: "[T]he [cathedral's] proportions tell us that we are in Italy, where the Île-de-France's soaring gothic was digested into a style entirely its own, and the use of a common name is a chronological bad habit (everything that happens at the same time must be christened with the same term)."[308] (*BO*, 51) Furthermore, such inheritance via "digestion" is not the only manner that traditions are transmitted, and the image of the parasitic mushrooms 'freeloading' (*pasożytkować*) off the surrounding plant roots finds its historical equivalent in the author's suggestion that the Doric invaders may have taken 'their' architectural style from the people whose land they conquered: "The invaders from the north—the Dorians—certainly took advantage of [*spożytkowali*] the experience of those they conquered: the Mycenaeans and the Cretans. [...] It is more than likely that the Doric temple, or at least its fundamental design, is derived from the central hall of a Mycenaean palace [...]."[309] (*BO*, 30) Crucially, the derivation of the Doric architectural style from a violent act of conquest is presented as a counterargument to the interpretation given by the Roman architect Vitruvius in the first century B.C.E., and then canonized in the eighteenth century by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, according to which the genesis of the classical Greek tradition is shrouded in "fairy-tale-like" (*bajeczna*) obscurity.[310] (*BO*, 29) Quite distinct from

[308] "[P]roporcje bryły mówią, że jesteśmy we Włoszech, gdzie strzelisty gotyk Île-de-France został przetrawiony na styl zupełnie swoisty, a wspólna nazwa używana jest z nałogów chronologicznych (wszytsko, co dzieje się w tym samym czasie, trzeba ochrzcić wspólnym terminem)."

[309] "Najeźdźcy z północy – Dorowie – spożytkowali na pewno doświadczenia tych, których podbili: Mykeńczyków i Kreteńczyków. […] Jest rzeczą więcej niż prawdopodobną, że świątynia dorycka, w każdym razie w swym zasadniczym planie, pochodzi od centralnej sali mykeńskiego pałacu […]."

[310] The entire sketch "U Dorów" could be read as a counter-text to Winckelmann's own description of the Doric temples of Paestum, in which he revitalized Vitruvius' claim that the proportions of the temples were based on the

Vitruvius' and Winckelmann's more straightforward and peaceful genealogies, Herbert's understanding of artistic inheritance traces not only the lateral movements of styles across seemingly distinct cultures, but also the violence often underlying such transfers.

Returning to the abovementioned differentiation of Duccio and Giotto, one notes that, whereas Duccio represents the possibility of a synthesis between two separate cultures, Giotto's work signals the severing of formerly firm ties between Europe and Asia. In a sense, though Giotto is characterized in the previously cited passage as resurrecting the artistic heritage of Ancient Rome, his naturalistic mode of representation symbolizes a disinheritance of the Byzantine tradition still vibrant in the more iconic paintings of Duccio. As already suggested by the reading of *Wawel*, such disinheritance does not always occur in the domain of the arts. The "disinherited" of that poem clearly refer, among other historical groups, to the members of the new People's Republics that have been separated from the rest of Europe, together with its various cultural traditions. A similar politically enforced dispossession occurs in the sketch-chronicle "O albigensach, inkwizytorach i trubadurach," a studious reconstruction of the medieval Albigensian Crusade in France that attempts to wrest a sympathetic portrayal of the persecuted Cathars from the very sources that sealed their historical fate as heretics. In a designation that suggests similarities to the hybrid artwork of Duccio, Herbert describes the Cathar faith as an "important synthesis of Eastern and Western elements" and traces its genealogy across the centuries beginning with the creation of Manicheanism in Babylon. (*BO*, 123) The Albigensian Crusade, which lasts from 1209 to 1229 and is followed by decades of forced conversion and terror, begins with the mysterious murder of the apostolic legate Pierre de Castelnau, whom Pope Innocent III had sent to Languedoc in order to quell the spread of the increasingly popular heresy. Herbert's translation

human body. Though Herbert ultimately affirms this claim, he is also careful to highlight that the temples are simultaneously an expression of human violence.

of the legate's excommunication of the Count of Toulouse, the political leader of Languedoc, indicates the relevance of this episode to the collection's overarching preoccupation with issues of inheritance: "At last, Pierre de Castelnau reaches the conclusion that the heresy will only be condemned with the help of force [...] – he anathematizes the Count of Toulouse. 'Whoever dispossesses [*wydziedziczy*] you is acting rightly, and whoever kills you will be blessed.'"[311] (*BO*, 131-2)

The specific context of this communication brings out yet another meaning of the verb *wydziedziczyć*, one that is not as clearly implied in *Wawel*: the forceful appropriation of possessions or property, which includes territory. This connotation of *wydziedziczyć* is repeated in a later passage of "O albigensach," which chronicles the (ultimately failed) attempt of Raymond II Trencavel, dispossessed son of the murdered viscount of Béziers, Albi, Carcassone, and the Razès, to recapture territory that had been seized by the crusaders in their attempt to purge the region of Languedoc of the Cathar faith: "With him are the lords of occupied castles who had been dispossessed [*wydziedziczeni*] by the French, along with the excellent cavalry of Aragon. The army makes quick progress, taking castles along the way that put up no resistance."[312] (*BO*, 151) In both of the passages cited above, the material and spatial connotation of *wydziedziczyć* as "to dispossess" is indisputably at the forefront. When Pierre de Castelnau expresses his wish that the Count of Toulouse be *wydziedziczony*, this statement refers specifically to his territorial holdings rather than to a more abstract sense of cultural legacy. Nevertheless, considering the ubiquity of the theme of inheritance (*dziedziczenie*) in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, in both its cultural and

[311] "Wreszcie Piotr de Castelnau dochodzi do wniosku, że tylko siłą będzie można potępić herezję [...] – rzuca na hrabiego Tuluzy klątwę. 'Ten, który was wydziedziczy, zrobi dobrze, a kto zabije, będzie błogosławiony'."

[312] "Są z nim wydziedziczeni przez Francuzów panowie okupowanych zamków i świetna aragońska jazda. Armia szybko posuwa się naprzód, biorąc po drodze zamki, które nie stawiają żadnego oporu."

material dimensions, it is difficult to not hear resonances of the collection's larger cultural discussion alongside this particular chapter's depiction of the dispossession of territory by the Catholic Church. In effect, the dual meaning of the term (*wy-*)*dziedziczyć* and the author's oscillation between these connotations brings together the travelogue's art historical treatment of artistic tradition and networks of influence and its chronicling of imperial conquest and colonization. As a central concept of the collection, "inheritance" suggests a complex connection between territory and culture. Indeed, Herbert indicates in the early sketch "U Dorów" that the two seemingly separate domains are inextricably intertwined:

> At first, the Greek conquests had an unsystematic character akin to the conquests of plundering pirates. They were followed by a legend that took ownership [*zdobywać na własność*] of the land before Greek cities grew on it. For Homer, lands to the west of the Ionian Sea are the domain of fairy tales. But then, thanks to the poets, Greek gods, sirens, and heroes take possession of non-Greek rivers, coasts, and islands.[313] (*BO*, 22)

The Greek poets after Homer are not only to be regarded as laying the groundwork for the (near) entirety of the literary tradition that follows them, but also for the dispossession of land from autochthonous inhabitants of the Italian Peninsula, whose own culture is effaced by artistically and (geo)politically influential poetic works that convert their territory into a "no man's land" ripe for the taking. (*BO*, 23; *ziemie* [...] *niczyje*) In this case, the violent attacks and seizures of land are not to be neglected as their own independent acts without which the larger Greek occupation of the peninsula likely would not have occurred. But the Greek legend lends an order and authority to the pillaging that undergirds Greek expansionist claims and legitimates settlement. In other words,

[313] "Zrazu podboje greckie miały charakter niesystematyczny, piracko-łupieżczy. Szła za nimi legenda, która zdobywała ziemie na własność, zanim wyrosły na niej greckie miasta. Dla Homera kraje na zachód od Morze Jońskiego są domeną baśni. Ale już wtedy, za sprawa poetów, niegreckie rzeki, wybrzeża morskie, groty i wyspy obejmują w posiadanie greccy bogowie, syreny i bohaterowie."

the poetic successors of Homer (Hesiod among them) transform a potentially disconnected series of raids into a systematic process of colonization.

The similarities that Herbert suggests between the native inhabitants of the Apennine Peninsula and the Poles has already been discussed, but "O albigensach" continues to construct this continuum between the new Peoples' Republics of the postwar era and near-forgotten civilizations of the past. The author's portrayal of the duchy of Toulouse as a multi-cultural region characterized by an atmosphere of racial and religious tolerance prefigures his later portrait of Lwów. And like the latter, the cultural hybridity of the former is described as being eliminated in the lead-up to the establishment of a world power, in this case France. Referring to the "eradication" of the Cathar heresy in the thirteen century, Herbert writes, "The event is directly connected to the ascendance of French power on the ruins of the duchy of Toulouse."[314] (*CP*, 97) Akin to the author's representation of the seemingly divergent cultural traditions of Lwów as a combination of the varying styles of European art and architecture, his depiction of the medieval Romance language of *langue d'oc* as the "language of poetry for all of Europe" employed by Catalan, English, French, German, and Italian poets presents the region as yet another diverse European microcosm capable of overcoming divisions between different languages, cultures, and ethnicities. (*BO*, 129; *językiem poezji dla całej Europy*) But the transhistorical continuum does not stop at the former Galician capital, as the author's chronicling of the "dictatorship" (*dyktatura*) of the Catholic Church and the interrogation and intimidation techniques of the early inquisitors pinpoints clear resemblances to the Stalinist beginnings of the Polish People's Republic. (*BO*, 132) Indeed, alongside highly suggestive depictions of forced conversions, denunciations of the innocent, and a system of unofficial informants, Herbert occasionally hints at the relation between

[314] "Fakt ten łączy się bezpośrednio z powstaniem potęgi francuskiej na gruzach hrabstwa Tuluzy." (*BO*, 123)

the events described and those of recent history: "History (not only of the Middle Ages) teaches us that a nation subjected to police methods becomes demoralized, crumbles internally and loses its capacity for resistance."[315] (*BO*, 145) The parenthetical in this passage is a typical manifestation of Herbert's use of understatement, but the implied referent would have been apparent for the author's contemporary readers, particularly those who had suffered at the hands of the Ministry of Public Security, the Polish secret police.

Nevertheless, the suffering of Polish citizens under Stalinism is only obliquely expressed in this passage, just as that of the Cathars is preserved chiefly in the texts of their persecutors, leaving historians of the crusade with a difficult task of reconstruction. As the author explains at the beginning of the chronicle-sketch, the secondary literature treating the episode of the Albigensian Crusade is vast, but extant primary sources stemming from the Cathars themselves are scant. Those who wish to learn the truth of this group's history must excavate it from a handful of problematic sources: "Not all works escape the sands and fires of history, so one must reconstruct human thought and suffering from fragments, dubious records, and citations from the writings of adversaries." (*BO*, 123)[316] As stated previously, the purpose of Herbert's project is not to merely describe an artwork or document an historical incident for its own sake, but rather in order to access the lived experience of the individuals or community involved in the event or the creation of the work. It is thus no coincidence that grasping the "suffering" (*cierpienie*) of the Cathars, alongside the doctrine of their faith, appears to be one of the specific goals of this reconstruction effort. Andrzej Franaszek, in writing about the pivotal role of suffering and

[315] "Historia (nie tylko średniowieczna) uczy, że naród poddany metodom policyjnym demoralizuje się, kruszy wewnętrznie i traci zdolność oporu."

[316] "Nie wszystkie dzieła uszły piaskom i ogniom historii, więc trzeba myśl ludzka i cierpienie rekonstruować z ułomków, przekazów wątpliwych i cytatów w pismach adwersarzy."

commiseration in Herbert's work, has highlighted the manner in which the co-experience of others' pain is construed by the author as a means of dismantling not only inter-personal boundaries, but also the divisions between peoples and historical periods: "[T]hrough suffering (as well as in suffering) one can transcend one's own 'I' and commiserate with others. Its ubiquity (and implicit identity) make commiseration capable of encompassing people of different cultures and periods [...]."[317] Suffering is thus, for Herbert, not only a tool for time travel, but also a medium of border-crossing, in that it provides a trans-historical and trans-cultural substrate that can be accessed from any place and time. In constructing the overarching comparison between the Cathars under the terror of the Inquisition and the Poles under the Bierut regime, the shared suffering of the two communities makes up the *tertium comparationis*. Of course, the identity of this suffering across the historical divide is not based on evidence that would satisfy scientific standards of objectivity; rather, it is projected by the contemporary subject into the past, as the author himself acknowledges near the outset of the sketch: "The author of this sketch is not a professional historian, but merely a storyteller [*opowiadacz*]. This frees him from scientific objectivity, allows sympathies and passions."[318] (*BO*, 128) It is for this reason that Herbert dawns the mantle of the chronicler (*kronikarz*), which he elsewhere describes as an "eye witness" (*naocznym świadkiem*), in portraying this historical episode in a manner that betrays his subjective viewpoint and collapses the historical distance between himself and the period and community in question. (*BO*, 144) He reorganizes historical testimony and injects his own interpretation of events in order to counteract

[317] "Tak więc dzięki cierpieniu (czy też: w cierpieniu) można wykroczyć poza własne 'ja', współczuć z innymi. Jego powszechność (i domyślna tożsamość) sprawia, że współczucie to zdolne jest ogarnąć ludzi różnych kultur i różnego czasu […]." Franaszek. *Ciemne źródło*. 64. Franaszek's emphasis on suffering and commiseration responds to previous readings that had taken the author's interest in Stoicism as a justification for interpreting his works as advocating a self-disciplined indifference in the face of pain.

[318] "Autor tego szkicu nie jest zawodowym historykiem, tylko opowiadaczem. To go zwalnia od naukowego obiektywizmu, dopuszcza sympatie i pasje."

the distortion of the historical episode in the "writings of adversaries," which is to say the reports left behind by defenders of the Catholic Church.

As already discussed above, *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* intervenes into the discursive operations of historians, authors, and other writers that have laid the groundwork for mass violence, denied a community its right to self-determination, or stripped that community of its heritage. Indeed, it constitutes an act of writing against writing, as Herbert intimates in "O albigensach": "Not only those who act in history, but also those who write about it feel the black demon of intolerance standing behind their back."[319] (*BO*, 128) The previous pages have presented an interpretation of Herbert's travelogue as an act taken against the severing of Poland and Eastern Europe from a broader European tradition that underlies both the Eastern and Western blocs. In this regard, it is an action undertaken not only vis-à-vis the past, but with an eye to the present as well, though Herbert only explicitly states the contemporary implications of his travels in later texts like "Wizja Europy" and "Holy Iona." Placing *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* in relation to the poem *Wawel* cited at the beginning of this section, one can see how the author's attempt to broaden the newly circumscribed European tradition such that it might include Polish culture—and more specifically his own work—repeats the labor of the "barbarian" miraculously transporting the Greek Acropolis to the Cracovian castle.[320] In this effort to rebuild a detached line of inheritance, Herbert draws support from T.S. Eliot's essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," which the former cites in his chapter on Siena. For the purposes of maintaining the particular emphases of

[319] "Nie tylko ci, którzy działają w historii, ale także ci, którzy o niej piszą, czują, jak za ich plecami staje czarny demon nietoleranci."

[320] Herbert characterizes the epic poem *Mirèio* by the Occitan poet Frédéric Mistral as the Provençal equivalent of Poland's national epic *Pan Tadeusz*, thereby placing Adam Mickiewicz in a long line of bards running from Homer to Mistral. (*BO*, 48)

Herbert's translation, an English translation of the Polish will be provided below, instead of Eliot's original English:

> [Tradition] cannot be inherited [*Nie można jej odziedziczyć*]; whoever desires it must construct [*wypracować*] it through enormous effort. First of all, it demands a historical sense, which must be recognized as nearly necessary for anyone who would like to remain a poet after crossing into his twenty-fifth year; the historical sense calls for the recognition not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence as well; the historical sense demands that the poet, in writing, not exclusively have his own generation in his blood, but that he be aware that the totality of European literature since Homer, and within it the totality of the literature of his own country, exists simultaneously [*równocześnie*] and forms a simultaneous order. [...] The artist cannot be evaluated in isolation; for comparison [*porównania*] and contrast, he must be placed among the dead.[321] (*BO*, 92-3)

The few, seemingly small differences between Herbert's translation and Eliot's original English text are revealing and speak to the manner in which the translation itself enacts its content. For instance, whereas the artist of Eliot's text "obtains" tradition through labor, signifying predominantly an effort of retrieval, Herbert's verb *wypracować*, akin to the German *ausarbeiten*, suggests the constructive element of this process.[322] Indeed, *wypracować* can also be understood as "to gain," but the secondary meaning of the verb as "to elaborate or devise" reverberates alongside this other meaning. In Herbert's translation, the act of gaining or obtaining tradition is therefore capable of being understood as a creative act that occurs at the hands of the contemporary writer. And the "depersonalization" that Eliot demands from the artist in their development of a "historical sense" is tempered by an appreciation of the necessary interestedness of the artist of the

[321] "Nie można jej odziedziczyć; kto je pragnie, musi ją wypracować ogromnym wysiłkiem. Po pierwsze, wymaga poczucia historycznego, które uznać należy za niemal konieczne dla każdego, kto chciałby nadal być poetą po przekroczeniu dwudziestu pięciu lat życia; historyczne poczucie wymaga dostrzegania nie tylko przeszłości przeszłej, ale i teraźniejszej, poczucie historyczne nakazuje poecie, by pisząc, nie miał we krwi wyłącznie własnego pokolenia, lecz świadomość, że całokształt literatury Europy od Homera, w jej zaś ramach całokształt literatury jego własnego kraju, istnieje równocześnie i tworzy równoczesny porządek. […] Nie można oceniać [artystę] w oderwaniu, trzeba umieścić go, dla porównania i przeciwstawienia, wśród zmarłych."

[322] T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays*, 2nd ed (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), 14.

present, for whom the past's reconstruction has both immediate and future consequences.[323] From Herbert's perspective, it is the postwar artist's desire to re-connect the materially and discursively bisected European heritage that makes this active striving for inheritance so vital.[324] The postulation of an overarching equality or *równość* between the two European blocs, communicated via analogies and comparisons (*porównania*) akin to the equation (*zrównanie*) of the Acropolis and the Wawel castle by the poem's 'barbaric' protagonist, represents a distinctly literary attempt to overcome the Cold War divide.

## VI. The Ekphrastic Pilgrim

Twenty years after the appearance of *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, Herbert published a poem entitled *Modlitwa Pana Cogito – podróżnika* (Prayer of Mr. Cogito – traveler) that addressed some of the contradictory aspect of his travels—not only those described in *Barbarzyńca*, but also his visits to Greece as depicted in the posthumously published *Labyrint nad morzem* (Labyrinth by the sea) and his travels to the Netherlands, which were the subject of his second published collection of

[323] Ibid., 17. Interestingly, Eliot's phrase "historical sense" could be taken from Nietzsche's essay *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, where it represents the primary tool of "antiquarian history." Alongside a number of acknowledged advantages, this mode of history, in Nietzsche's reading, has the potential disadvantage of stifling innovation and ignoring the demands of the present and the future: "Der historische Sinn, wenn er *ungebändigt* waltet und alle seine Consequenzen zieht, entwurzelt die Zukunft, weil er die Illusionen zerstört und den bestehenden Dingen ihre Atmosphäre nimmt, in der sie allein leben können. [...] Wenn hinter dem historischen Trieben kein Bautrieb wirkt, wenn nicht zerstört und aufgeräumt wird, damit eine bereits in der Hoffnung lebendige Zukunft auf dem befreit Boden ihr Haus baue, wenn die Gerechtigkeit allein waltet, dann der schaffende Instinct entkräftet und entmuthigt." Friedrich Nietzsche, *Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*, ed. Günter Figal (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 2009), 65. Herbert's travelogue appears devoted to utilizing this "historical sense" while also preserving the "creative instinct" that Nietzsche perceives as oriented toward the needs of the present; indeed, Herbert's attention to the historical persecution of forgotten communities appears aligned with Nietzsche's conception of "critical history," which carries out the negation or "destruction" mentioned in the above-cited passage.

[324] In fact, Herbert's citation of Eliot's work already performs a reconstruction of this severed heritage, to a certain extent. In his acceptance speech for the Ingersoll Foundation's T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing in 1995, he describes the effort required to better acquaint himself with Eliot's work in the immediate postwar years: "I decided to familiarize myself with everything the great poet had written. This was not easy. After the war, in real socialist countries [*w krajach realnego socjalizmu*], Eliot was banned – which, as everybody knows, did not harm poetry, but enshrouded it in the disgrace of censors and book-burners." (*MD*, 132)

travelogues *Martwa natura z wędzidłem* (Still life with a bridle). As the figure of Pan Cogito acknowledges in the poem, when compared to the struggles endured by the average Polish citizen after the war, the voyages seem an escape from the trials of contemporary life in the Polish People's Republic:

> Lord
>
> I thank You for creating a world beautiful and very diverse
>
> and for allowing me in Your inexhaustible beneficence to visit places that were not the places of my daily torment [...]
>
> – forgive me – that I only thought of myself when the irreparable lives of others cruelly revolved around me like the great astrological clock at St. Peter's in Beauvais
>
> that I was lazy absentminded overcautious in labyrinths and caves
>
> and forgive me for not fighting like Lord Byron for the happiness of conquered peoples and merely observing moonrises and museums[325] (*WZ*, 454-5)

In light of the previous sections of this chapter, the irony of Mr. Cogito's expressions of gratitude and requests for forgiveness should be clear.[326] It is true, of course, that Herbert's European explorations offered a rather luxurious contrast to the tribulations of his compatriots, most of whom had neither the means nor the opportunity for such trips, to say nothing of the difficulties of daily life. Nevertheless, the previous readings have attempted to highlight the degree to which Herbert's

[325] "Panie// dziękuję Ci że stworzyłeś świat piękny i bardzo różny// a także za to że pozwoliłeś mi w niewyczerpanej dobroci Twojej być w miejscach które nie były miejscami mojej codziennej udręki […]// – wybacz – że myślałem tylko o sobie gdy życie innych okrutnie nieodwracalne krążyło wokół mnie jak wielki astrologiczny zegar u świętego Piotra w Beauvais// że byłem leniwy roztargniony zbyt ostrożny w labiryntach i grotach// a także wybacz że nie walczyłem jak lord Byron o szczęście ludów podbitych i oglądałem tylko wschody księżyca i muzea"

[326] Barańczak, for instance, refers to Mr. Cogito as Herbert's "'mask' or persona" and draws attention to the complex relationship that exists between the figure and the author himself in his reading of the poem *Pan Cogito Reads the Paper*: "As a whole, it can be treated as a demonstrative example of the technique of irony by which Herbert simultaneously identifies with and distances himself from Mr. Cogito [...]." Stanisław Barańczak, *Uciekinier z utopii*, 103; 108.

travelogues and art-historical essays were penned as a means of addressing the postwar struggles of Poland and the other People's Republics. The characterization of these travelogues as produced via the "mere observation of moonrises and museums" could only be made by one who had forgotten the critique of museums found in the author's essay on Arles, for instance,[327] or the documentation of persecuted peoples contained in nearly every sketch of the collection. Considering *Barbarzyńca*'s discussion of the use of literature and myth as tools of colonization, the distinction between action and writing suggested by the last stanza of the passage cited above is not as simple as it may initially seem. Moreover, the reference to Lord Byron signals the Polish literary context from which this differentiation between word and deed is drawn. Byron is invoked in a similar context in Cyprian Norwid's poem *Do Walentego Pomiana Z.* (To Walenty Pomian Z.), which serves as an epilogue for the collection *Vade-mecum*: "Byron's languid tragedies/ I would not call his works, but the impassioned/ Greek tales, the thread of which was spun/ In his womb, and the doleful stanzas flew away/ [...] And wept that they were not a military bulletin:/ A lover, a hero, a martyr – *action* [...]."[328] Norwid, a late Romantic poet whose aesthetic might better be described as neoclassical, problematizes the simplistic division between the artistic work (*dzieło*) and the act (*czyn*) throughout his oeuvre. And it is safe to assume that Herbert's invocation of Byron is simultaneously a citation of this late nineteenth-century exile-poet, whose style and thought were constant sources of inspiration for the postwar writer, of which more below. In this

[327] "Our ancestors did not have our penchant for creating museums. They did not turn ancient artifacts into exhibitions shut up in glass showcases. They used them for new constructions, incorporated the past into the present without mediation [*bezpośrednio*]. Thus, a visit to a city like Arles, where epochs and stones are intermixed, is more instructive than the cold didacticism of systematized collections." (*BO*, 42)

[328] "[N]ie tragedie rozwlekłe Byrona/ Dziełami jego nazwałbym, lecz te namiętne/ Powiastki greckie, których nić u jego łona/ Snowała się, a strofy ulatały smętne/ […] I płaczą, że nie były armii-biuletynem:/ Kochankiem, bohaterem, męczennikiem – *czynem* […]." Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, ed. Józef Fert (Wrocław: Zakład im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo, 1990), 190.

regard, the above-cited stanza in Herbert's poem, which might initially strike the reader as a rather straightforward expression of remorse, has the effect of placing Pan Cogito's apology within a distinct tradition, of layering it with contradictions and intertexts that constitute yet another digressive labyrinth.

The previously cited stanzas of *Modlitwa Pana Cogito - podróżnika* are followed by several familiar references drawing together the poet's journeys to Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, and Scotland and situating his engagement with the arts within the context of his travels:

> – I thank You that works made for Your glory gave me particles of their mystery and that I in my great arrogance thought that Duccio van Eyck Bellini painted for me as well
>
> and that the Acropolis which I never entirely understood patiently peeled away its maimed body before me
>
> – I ask that You reward the grey-haired old man who unbidden brought me fruits from his garden on the sun-burned native island of the son of Laertes
>
> and Miss Helen on the foggy isle of Mull in the Hebrides for receiving me in the Greek way [*po grecku*] and at night requesting that I place a lighted lamp in the window facing Holy Iona so that the lights of the earth greeted each other[329] (*WZ*, 455)

The anecdote regarding Miss Helen and the isle of Mull returns us to the previously discussed radio essay "Holy Iona," which explicitly lays out the Cold War framework for the author's travels and presents the travelogues as a (potentially futile) artistic response to the political-geographical and cultural divide between Eastern and Western Europe. The Iron Curtain goes unnamed here, but the intimated similarity between Miss Helen, whose behavior is in keeping with the Greek code of hospitality represented most memorably in *The Odyssey*, and the grey-haired Ithacan

[329] "– dziękuję Ci że dzieła stworzone ku chwale Twojej udzieliły mi cząstki swojej tajemnicy i w wielkiej zarozumiałości pomyślałem że Duccio van Eyck Bellini malowali także dla mnie// a także Akropol którego nigdy nie zrozumiałem do końca cierpliwie odrywał przede mną okaleczone ciało// – proszę Cię żebyś wynagrodził siwego staruszka który nie proszony przyniósł mi owoce ze swego ogrodu na spalonej słońcem ojczystej wyspie syna Laertesa// a także dla Miss Helen z mglistej wysepki Mull na Hebrydach za to że przyjęła mnie po grecku i prosiła żeby w nocy zostawić w oknie wychodzącym na Holy Iona zapaloną lampę aby światła ziemi pozdrawiały się[.]"

demonstrates the supranational unity underlying the "world beautiful and very diverse." More important for the purposes of this section, however, is the subjective unveiling of canonical landmarks and works of art described in the previous two stanzas. Presumably due in large part to the labor of his creative imagination, the traveler is able to perceive the Acropolis, mentioned here yet again after its appearance in *Wawel* and the travel essay "Akropol" (Acropolis), in its original, ancient form, liberated of its ruined contemporary manifestation. And his initiation into the "secrets" of the paintings of Duccio, Jan van Eyck, and Giovanni Bellini occurs as a result of his "great arrogance," his belief that these painters produced their works not only for God and their contemporaries, but also for the twentieth-century Polish subject. The activity of the traveler, be it Pan Cogito or Herbert himself, in interpreting these works of art therefore represents the construction of yet another continuum, much like the one asserted between Miss Helen on the isle of Mull and the "grey-haired old man" on Odysseus' native island.

In treating the border-crossing function of the traveler's engagement with works of art in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, it is worth considering at least briefly the manner in which Herbert's poetry and travelogues constitute a unique continuation of the poetry and thought of Cyprian Norwid, particularly since Norwid himself wrote a good deal of ekphrastic poetry during his peregrinations around Europe and the United States and the poetic (and political) principles of his work overlap with many of Herbert's own.[330] As already mentioned above, Norwid was an émigré poet whose writings in many ways responded to perceived oversights in the works of his Romantic colleagues Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński, the so-called "three bards" (*trójca wieszczów*) of Polish poetry often credited with inaugurating Polish national

[330] See Aneta Grodecka, *Wiersze o obrazach: Studium z dziejów ekfrazy* [Poems about images: A historical study of ekphrasis] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009), 68-77.

literature.[331] Though Norwid conceived of his writings as contributing to the burgeoning national tradition being consolidated by the *wieszczy*, he sought to broaden the political and aesthetic concerns of his work in a manner that moved beyond the confines of the nation.[332] Norwid was committed to situating Poland and the Polish national tradition within a larger European context consisting of individual national cultures of equal value and thus a broad network of mutual influence, as Stefan Sawicki has argued: "Norwid's impassioned Polishness chastised any kind of atrophied patriotism and any display of national parochialness, postulating a culture that synthesized native achievements and the European tradition."[333] In this respect, one can perceive Norwid's influence on Herbert's own conception of a transnational continuum of European culture capable of spanning the Cold War divide.

Although *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* contains no explicit mention of Norwid, those familiar with the latter's work can discern numerous allusions to his poetry in Herbert's travel essays, particularly to the collection *Vade-mecum* published posthumously in 1947. Alongside a reference to the eternal antagonism of the Montagues and the Capulets that evokes Norwid's famous poem *W Weronie* (In Verona),[334] Herbert twice uses the verb *pielgrzymować* ("to go on a pilgrimage")

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[331] *Trójca wieszczów*, the popular Polish designation for this triad, literally means "trinity of seers."

[332] In his analysis of the role of sacred history (*historia święta*) in Norwid's poetry, Arent van Nieukerken differentiates the late Romantic's approach from that of Mickiewicz and Słowacki, as well as that of the Romantic philosophers August Cieszkowski and Bronisław Trentowski, in that Norwid does not reduce sacred history to the national dimension but rather preserves its universal applicability. Arent van Nieukerken, "Romantyzm jenajski, Cyprian Norwid, Walter Benjamin i Friedrich Creuzer: Symbol i alegoria" [Jena Romanticism, Cyprian Norwid, Walter Benjamin and Friedrich Creuzer: Symbol and allegory], *Prace Filologiczne: Literaturoznactwo* [Philological works: Literary studies] 10, no. 7 (2017), 259-278.

[333] "Żarliwa polskość Norwida, chłoszcząca równocześnie każdy zwyrodniały patriotyzm, każdy przejaw zaściankowości narodowej, postulująca kulturę, która byłaby syntezą rodzimych osiągnięć i europejskich tradycji […]." Stefan Sawicki, "Norwid: od strony prawnuków" [Norwid: from the great-grandchildren's perspective], *Teksty Drugie* 6 (2001), 32

[334] "The Montagues and the Capulets, who from generation to generation bombed [*bombardowali*] each other's gardens with stones [...]." (*BO*, 64); "Over the home of the Capulets and the Montagues/ Rinsed by rain, disturbed by thunder/ A gentle eye of blue;// Beholds the rubble of hostile burghs,/ The smashed gates to the gardens –/ And throws

with respect to his own voyages,[335] thereby evoking not only a longstanding religious ritual but also a trope of Polish Romanticism central to Norwid's work as well. In contrast to the Polish pilgrim tasked with preserving Polish national unity in exile in Mickiewicz's *Księgi narodu polskiego i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* (Books of the Polish people and the Polish pilgrimage), Herbert's "pilgrim" appears to harken back to Norwid's poem *Pielgrzym* (Pilgrim) from *Vade-mecum*: "Above the states [*stanami*] there is a *state of states* [*stanów-stan*]/ Like a tower above flat houses/ Jutting into the clouds...// You think that I am not a lord,/ Because of my movable home/ Of camel hide...// [...] But even I *have as much land/ As my foot covers/ Whither or whenever* [*Dopókąd*] *I go*!..."[336] Unlike Herbert's more secular cultural continuum, the *stanów-stan* extending over the individual *stanami*, which could also be interpreted as referring to "estates" such as the nobility or the knightly class, is of an indisputably religious character, as indicated by the Biblical allusion to the book of Joshua: "Every spot on which your foot treads I give to you [...]."[337] Nevertheless, within the Polish tradition, the domain of which the vagrant Norwid claims lordship arguably provides Herbert with a literary basis for the transnational "path" or *droga* that the poet traverses across Europe, thereby binding together seemingly disparate cultures. Furthermore, the untranslatable word *dopókąd*, which combines *dopóki* ("until") and *dokąd*

down a star// [...] But commoners and scholars say/ They are not tears, but rather stones [...]." Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, 24-5.

[335] "It turned out that even making a pilgrimage [*pielgrzymować*] by foot to Paestum was worth it." (*BO*, 22); "Therefore I decided to go on a pilgrimage [*pielgrzymować*] to Piero della Francesca [...]." (*BO*, 180)

[336] "Nad stanami jest i *stanów-stan*,/ Jako wieża nad płaskie domy/ Stercząca w chmury…// Wy myślicie, że i ja nie Pan/ Dlatego że dom mój ruchomy,/ Z wielbłądziej skóry…// […] Przecież i ja *ziemi tyle mam,*/ *Ile jej stopa ma pokrywa*/ *Dopokąd idę*!..." Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, 35-6.

[337] Jos. 1:3 (Tanakh). The Polish version reads: "Wszelkie miejsce, po którym deptać będzie stopa nogi waszej, dam wam." Cited in Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, 36.

("whither"), intimates that the travels of the titular pilgrim are not only spatial but also temporal, stretching back into the past like Herbert's *droga*.[338]

Czesław Miłosz, who claims in his English-language *History of Polish Literature* that "Herbert's passionate interest in the civilization of the Mediterranean owes much to Cyprian Norwid," portrays Norwid's travel writings in a manner that suggests clear affinities between the émigré's poetry and Herbert's project as previously elucidated in this chapter:

> [Norwid] has been called "a poet of ruins" because he went to the sources of European history in the Mediterranean region and listened to the echoes of its past. For Norwid, History was a continuity, a process tending in a certain direction, a constant accomplishment of God's hidden plan through mankind. [...] And some of his views are striking: his stress on the role of "peripheries"—Samaria for Judea, Gaul for the Roman Empire, America for Europe—and the gradual movement from the centers toward the peripheries; or his theory of "stumbling blocks": for America—the Negro, for England—Ireland, for the old Polish *Respublica*—the Ukraine, for Russia, Prussia, and Austria—Poland, for France—continuous revolutions; or his principle of "things passed over in silence": every epoch passes over something in silence, and that which remains beneath the surface, inadmissible to the consciousness of one era, becomes a motive power to the next. Norwid was not a politician, and he maintained his distance from all the political groupings of the Great Emigration. He believed that an artist participates in history through his art.[339]

Many of the elements of Norwid's poetry that Miłosz enumerates here correspond to aspects of Herbert's work already discussed: a lyrical examination of "ruins," which is to say the often damaged or incomplete remnants of bygone epochs; the existence of a historical continuum preserving not only the Western canon but also traditions that have been silenced as a result of

[338] In Herbert's essay on the poetry of Józef Czechowicz, a twentieth-century avant-garde poet inspired by Norwid and to whom Herbert himself was heavily indebted, the author lists the following motifs that Czechowicz drew from Norwid: "the motif of the lost fatherland [...]; the motif of intellectual honesty and poetry that adequately names things [*poezji dającej opowiednie dla rzeczy słowo*] [...]; as well as the motif of history read from ruins." Zbigniew Herbert, "Uwagi o poezji Józefa Czechowicza" [Remarks on the poetry of Józef Czechowicz], *Węzeł gordyjski oraz inne pisma rozproszone* [The gordian knot and other scattered writings], ed. Paweł Kądziela (Warsaw: Więzi, 2001), 428. This final motif is clearly closely related to Herbert's own historical project as put forward by the traveler in "Lascaux."

[339] Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 475; 272-273.

violence; an equal weighting of both "central" and "peripheral" communities that affirms the interconnectedness of seemingly distinct cultures; a politically-engaged aesthetic that, nevertheless, privileges art over political activity. What he neglects to mention, however, is Norwid's career-long interest in the visual arts, owing partially to the nineteenth-century poet's own facility as an engraver, lithographer, and sketch artist.[340] Furthermore, like Herbert, Norwid's travels throughout Western Europe allowed him to observe well-known works of art first-hand, as opposed to through textual representation. The opportunity to immediately translate these images into texts was a particularly valuable one for an author who, according to the introductory poem to *Vade-mecum*, was aesthetically committed to "giving each thing its appropriate word" (*odpowiednie dać rzeczy słowo*).[341] Indeed, in his ekphrastic representation of Henryk Rodakowski's *Portret generała Henryka Dembińskiego* (Portrait of General Henryk Dembiński), which Norwid saw in Paris in 1856, the author added a footnote emphasizing that he had written the epigrammatic poem "while returning from the studio where the portrait [was on display]", thereby highlighting the importance of the still-lingering connection between the poet and the painting during the poem's composition.[342] Additionally, the visual arts, particularly sculpture, contribute to Norwid's historical project owing to their capacity to eternalize the moment of their creation, as evidenced in the poem *Posąg i obuwie* (Sculpture and footwear) in which an Athenian sculptor assures a cobbler of the superiority of his art: "I speak of eternity because/ The chisel eternalizes moments [...]."[343] His short, poetic commentaries on works such as Pierre Legros' *The*

[340] Aneta Grodecka, *Wiersze o obrazach*, 68-71.

[341] Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, 14.

[342] "Pisałem – powracając z pracowni, gdzie portret, 1856, września." Cyprian Norwid, *Na Portret generała Dembińskiego* [On the portrait of General Dembiński], in *Pisma wybrane* [Selected texts], vol. 1, ed. Juliusz Gomulicki (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1968), 258; Aneta Grodecka, *Wiersze o obrazach*, 71.

[343] "O wieczności ja dlatego mówię, / Że pod dłutem zwieczniają się chwile […]." Cyprian Norwid, *Vade-mecum*, 22.

*Death of St. Stanislas Kostka* and Albrecht Dürer's *Melancholia*, for instance, thereby constitute alternate means of reaching back toward and reconstructing otherwise inaccessible moments of the past.

Norwid's return from the studio with *Portret generała Henryka Dembińskiego* still fresh on his mind evokes Herbert leaving Lascaux with the imprint of the "barbarian" on his hands. As already mentioned, the traveler's physical presence in the sites and before the objects he is portraying is central to *Barbarzyńca*'s project of overcoming historical and cultural boundaries. In fact, Herbert's "pilgrimages" to the cities and regions in which the artists lived and produced their works takes up, as one would expect, a long tradition of travel writing that finds it most succinct formulation in Goethe's famous opening to his *West-östlicher Divan*, which Herbert cites in his sketch on Piero della Francesca: "*Wer den Dichter will verstehen, muss in Dichters Lande gehen* [...]." (*BO*, 180) However, Herbert translates Goethe's assertion, in an essay full of transpositions, so that it not only becomes applicable to the visual arts but also shifts the focus from understanding the (individual) artist to experiencing or approximating the conditions in which the artwork was produced: "In the domain of painting, Goethe's clever principle [...] can be translated in this way: as the fruits of light, images must be beheld under the sun of the artist's homeland."[344] (*BO*, 180) Of course, this is not to say that the operations of reason are absent from his method, or that "understanding" is not one of the poet's goals; as Pan Cogito prays in *Modlitwa Pana Cogito – podróżnika*, "Lord let me [...] understand [*rozumiał*] other people other languages other sufferings."[345] (*WZ*, 456) But Herbert's trips to the artists' homeland draws inspiration not only

[344] "Mądra zasada Goethego […] tłumaczy się w dziedzinie malarstwa w ten sposób: obrazy jako owoce światła należy oglądać pod słońcem ojczyzny artysty."

[345] "[P]ozwól o Panie [...] żebym rozumiał innych ludzi inne języki inne cierpienia."

from Goethe and the tradition of the *Bildungsreise*,[346] but also from the French Romantic painter Eugène Fromentin, whose *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* (The old masters) served as the poet's only guidebook through the Netherlands during the trips that would later comprise *Martwa natura*.[347] The following passage is taken from that work's introduction:

> I am coming to see Rubens and Rembrandt at home [*chez eux*], and likewise the Dutch school in its setting, always the same, of agricultural and maritime life, dunes, pastures, large clouds, thin horizons. These are two distinct arts, very complete, very independent from one another, very brilliant, which would demand to be studied by an historian, a thinker, and a painter simultaneously. Of these three men that, in order to be successful, must be united into one, I do not know what I have in common with the first two; as for the painter, one ceases to be one as long as one has the feeling of distance [...]. I will pass through museums and not review them. I will stop in front of certain men; I will not recount their lives or catalogue their works, not even those preserved by their compatriots. [...] I will merely express, standing in front of a few paintings, the surprises, the pleasures, the astonishments and, no less precisely, the pique they have caused me. In this, I must merely translate [*traduire*] with sincerity the inconsequential sensations of a pure dilettante. I warn you, there will be no method, no procedure followed in these studies.[348]

Like Goethe, Fromentin's observations of the Dutch artworks contained in this survey focus on the individual artist as opposed to the specific epoch and culture in which they created. Nevertheless, these "certain men" appear as metonyms for their works, as the French painter is predominantly interested in the "sensations" that the paintings arouse in himself. The distance that Fromentin implicitly attributes to the historian and the intellectual is overcome by means of the painter's non-scholarly and affective engagement with the artworks. And the connection between the artworks and the "setting" (*cadre*) in which their painters developed their craft enables the

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[346] In his essay "Pana Montaigne'a podróż do Italii" (Mr. Montaigne's trip to Italy), Herbert refers to the *Bildungsreise* as "the most noble genre" of travel literature and defines it as a "pilgrimage [*pielgrzymka*] to cultural holy places." He thereby broadens the genre by moving it away from a secular, scientific conception of *Bildung* with its roots in the Enlightenment. Zbigniew Herbert, "Pana Montaigne'a podróż do Italii" [Mr. Montaigne's trip to Italy], in *Węzeł gordyjski*, 39.

[347] Bożena Shallcross, *Through the Poet's Eye*, 60.

[348] Eugène Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'autrefois: Belgique-Hollande*, 18th ed. (Paris: Plon-Nourrit, 1908), 7-8.

travelling artist-interpreter to access the ahistorical foundation of these works by traveling to the 'home' of their creators, which is, unlike the object of historians, "always the same."

Herbert's characterization of art as "fruits of light" borrows from Fromentin's account of the Dutch school as growing out of the presumably unchanging elements of the natural environment. And the former's description of the paintings, sculptures, and architectural works in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* transmits the poet's subjective response to the objects discussed, as in the opening to his sketch on Piero della Francesco, in which the traveler portrays his first face-to-face encounter with the artist's painting *Nativity* at the National Gallery in London: "It is difficult to describe this kind of aesthetic shock. The painting rivets [you] to one place and one place only; one cannot walk away or approach it in order to smell the paint or observe the brushwork, as one would with a modern painting."[349] (*BO*, 179) Despite the seeming objectivity—*trudno* ("it is difficult") and *można* ("one can") give these sentences an impersonal quality that is difficult to recreate in English—, this description clearly arises from a subjective experience that Herbert, following Fromentin's advice, attempts to "translate" for the reader. And the arresting of the viewer portrayed here corresponds with Fromentin's interpretation of the artwork as the dominant agent of the interaction, as the catalyst of the subject's experience. In the short, programmatic essay "Duszyczka" (Little soul) found in *Labyrint nad morzem*, Herbert presents great works of art as subjects in such an encounter: "Someone rightfully said that it is not only we who read Homer, observe Giotto's frescoes, and listen to Mozart, but that Homer, Giotto, and Mozart examine us, listen to us, and establish our emptiness and stupidity."[350] Such an interaction

[349] "Trudno określić ten rodzaj estetycznego porażenie. Obraz przykuwa do jednego, jedynego miejsca, nie można od niego odejść ani przybliżyć się jak do obrazów współczesnych, żeby powąchać farbę i podpatrzyć fakturę."

[350] "Ktoś słusznie powiedział, że to nie tylko my czytamy Homera, oglądamy freski Giotta, słuchamy Mozarta, ale Homer, Giotto, i Mozart przypatrują się, przysłuchują nam i stwierdzają naszą próżność i głupotę." Zbigniew Herbert, "Duszyczka" [Little soul], in *Labyrint nad morzem*, 91.

seemingly obviates the traditional distinction between the observing subject and the observed object, as both sides are equally involved in the act of perception. To consider yet another similarity between the two travelers, for Fromentin the ideal observer's own status as a painter acquainted with the process of production serves to bridge any historical and cultural gaps between artwork and onlooker. Though the traveling narrator of *Barbarzyńca* is not acknowledged to be an accomplished visual artist, Herbert, like Norwid, was a skilled draftsman. And although these works were not included in any of the publications of the travel essays published during Herbert's lifetime, his archive holds nearly three hundred notebooks containing sketches of paintings, landscapes, and works of architecture that the author made during his journeys, a practice advocated by Fromentin in *Les Maîtres d'autrefois* as a means of dealing with otherwise "indecipherable" images.[351]

At one point in the collection, the traveler hints at his employment of a *szkicownik* ("sketchbook"), but his descriptions of the artworks encountered make no mention of his use of Fromentin's method. (*BO*, 211) Interestingly, as has been noted in the scholarship, the sketchbooks found in Herbert's archive contain very few sketches of the works that he textually reproduces in his travelogues.[352] One could argue that this lack confirms the status of the ekphrastic descriptions in *Barbarzyńca* as substitutions for sketches drawn by hand. In this regard, one should reconsider the collection's opening: "What is this book in my opinion? A collection of sketches [*szkiców*]. A travel report."[353] (*BO*, 5) As already noted, the designation of the individual essays as sketches

[351] Eugène Fromentin, *Les Maîtres d'autrefois: Belgique-Hollande*, 229; Aneta Grodecka, *Wiersze o obrazach*, 115.

[352] Emilia Olechnowicz, "Promieniowanie" [Radiation], in *Herbert: Studia i dokumenty*, 205-6. The major exceptions to this are his sketches of Greek landscapes and architecture, such as the Acropolis, the Palace of Knossos, and the Cyclopean Walls in Mycenae.

[353] "Czym jest ta książka w moim pojęciu? Zbiorem szkiców. Sprawozdaniem z podróży."

refers in part to their tentative, unfinished quality, corresponding to the caution and non-scientific uncertainty that characterizes Herbert's work in general, as discussed in this chapter's opening. Nevertheless, the "collection of sketches" could also signify the numerous instances of ekphrasis found in *Barbarzyńca*. The word *szkic*, employed in such a way, suggests a correspondence between the visual arts and the written word, a congruity that would enable the one to faithfully reproduce the other. At the same time, however, the two media are irrefutably distinct, as Herbert himself acknowledges when confronted with the bison of Lascaux: "I realize that any description – an inventory of elements – is powerless in the face of this masterpiece, which has such a dazzling and obvious unity."[354] (*BO*, 10) This cursory recognition of the semiotic distinction between literature, consisting of discrete units organized in succession, and painting, made up of elements that are co-present and thus unified, effectively paraphrases the main argument of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's famous *Laokoon. Oder, Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie.* The translation or "transposition"—to reference Théophile Gautier's canonical definition of ekphrasis as *une transposition d'art*[355]—of painting into literature thereby constitutes the crossing of a border or *Grenze*, to use Lessing's own terminology.

Ekphrasis as a crossing from one medium to another does not necessarily confine itself to the transmission of paintings through textual reproduction. A similarly ekphrastic impulse can be perceived in Herbert's essay entitled *Próba opisania krajobrazu greckiego* (Attempt to describe a Greek landscape), which was first published in 1966 in the journal *Poezja* (Poetry) and then posthumously released in *Labyrint nad morzem*:

[354] "Zdaję sobie sprawę, że wszelki opis – inwentarz elementów – bezsilny jest wobec tego arcydzieła, które ma tak oślepiającą i oczywistą jedność."

[355] Rozalia Słodczyk, "Powrót do ekfrazy. Próba systematyzacji oraz propozycja typologii" [Return to ekphrasis. An attempt at systematization and a proposed typology], *Teksty Drugie* 5 (2018), 354.

> I went to Greece to encounter the landscape. One can make a perfectly good study of Greek art in European museums. The humid night on board a ship sailing the classic route from Brindisi to Piraeus was filled with questions about the color of the sky, the sea, and the mountains. I thought it would be a continuation of the Italian landscape. But by morning, when the first islands began to appear on the horizon, then the steep coast of the Peloponnesus and finally the Bay of Corinth, I understood that it was given to me to know something I would not be able to compare with anything else. It is a landscape that by its very own nature defies description. It is impossible to find a place that would be even an approximation to a sum, a synthesis of the traveler's visual experience, impossible to cut from that tangle of blue sky, mountain, water, air, and light a single view and say: that is Greece.[356] (*CP*, 440)

Much like the chapter in *Barbarzyńca* depicting the author's "pilgrimage" to Piero della Francesca, an essay that consists largely of detailed ekphrases of the painter's work, this trip to Greece presents a correspondence between travel and the act of description. On the one hand, the "description" (*opis*) constitutes an opportunity for the traveler to "familiarize himself" (*oswajać się*) with the unfamiliar work or terrain, to employ a phrase that Herbert uses on numerous occasions in *Barbarzyńca* to characterize his labor of description. In the passage cited above, the encounter with the landscape occurs not only in the physical domain but also, and more importantly, on the plane of writing; *spotkanie* ("meeting") is the goal of the titular act of *opisanie* ("description").

In this way, ekphrasis in Herbert's work can be understood as a mode of writing toward the object of observation, as a way of approaching and attempting to understand it. The arrival at comprehension hereby parallels the arrival at a point of destination toward which the traveler initially set out. Like Johnson's use of the *Vergleich*, ekphrasis in Herbert's travelogues constitutes

[356] "Do Grecji jechałem na spotkanie z krajobrazem. Sztukę grecka można poznać nieźle w muzeach europejskich. Duszna noc na pokładzie statku płynącego klasycznym szlakiem z Brundizjum do Pireusu pełna była pytań o kolor nieba, morza i gór. Sądziłem, że będzie to przedłużenie krajobrazu włoskiego. Ale już rankiem, kiedy na horyzoncie zaczęły pojawiać się pierwsze wyspy, urwisty brzeg Peloponezu i wreszcie Zatoka Koryncka, zrozumiałem, że dane mi będzie poznać coś, czego nie zdołam porównać z niczym. Jest to krajobraz wymykający się opisowi przez samą swoją naturę. Niepodobna znaleźć miejsca, które byłoby w przybliżeniu sumą, syntezą doznań wzrokowych podróżnika, niepodobna wykroić z tego splątania błękitu, gór, wody, powietrza i światła żadnego widoku i powiedzieć – to jest Grecka." Zbigniew Herbert, *Labyrint nad morzem*, 59.

part of a hermeneutical process, although the border between the subject and the object becomes, in the latter case, a boundary between the text itself and the painting or other visual object that the text is laboring to represent. The sketch from *Barbarzyńca* devoted to the artwork of Piero della Francesca presents several particularly suggestive employments of ekphrastic writing, such as in the poet-traveler's description of Piero's diptych of Federigo da Montefeltro and his wife:

> The contrast between the two figures is striking [*uderzający*]. Battista's face is waxen, drained of blood (thus the speculation that the portrait was painted after her death), while the Duke's tawny face vibrates [*bije*] with energy: a vulture-like profile—a head with raven-black hair set on a lion's neck and strong torso. A red robe and head-dress. Duke Montefeltro's bust rises like a lone rock against a fantastical, remote, and delicately painted landscape. To span [*przebyć*] the distance between the figure and the landscape, our gaze must plunge into an abyss [*przepaść*] without any intermediate planes, without continuity [*ciągłości*] of space and perspective. The figure of the Duke falls into the foreground from an ineffably light sky like a hot meteor.[357] (*CP*, 151)

Many of the aforementioned keywords of *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* appear in this dynamic ekphrastic depiction of the early Renaissance painting. The "abyss" (*przepaść*) between the foreground and background in Piero's diptych mirrors the "abyss of history" that the poet-traveler expresses his intention to cross in the collection's opening sketch. The "continuity" (*ciągłość*) lacking in the distance between the two planes, which must be traversed (*przebyć*) by the observer's gaze, parallels the "infinitude" (*nieskończoność*) that Herbert endeavors to construct between geographically and temporally distant civilizations. The fact that this journey between the two separate planes of the painting is made by the eye or gaze of the travelling spectator signals the centrality of vision for Herbert's project. At the same time, as has already been hinted in the preceding sections, the eye of this traveler is by no means a disembodied one: the designation of

[357] "Kontrast tych dwóch postaci jest uderzający. Battista ma twarz woskową, bez kropli krwi (stąd domysły, że obraz malowany był po śmierci księżnej). Za to ogorzała twarz księcia bije energia. Profil jest sępi, głowa osadzona na lwim karku i potężnym korpusie. Czerwone nakrycie głowy i takaż szata, kruczoczarne gęste włosy. Popiersie księcia Montefeltro wznosi się jak samotna skała na tle fantazyjnego, dalekiego i bardzo delikatnie malowanego pejzażu. Żeby przebyć dystans między postacią i krajobrazem, spojrzenie musi runąć w przepaść bez żadnych pośrednich planów, bez żadnej ciągłości przestrzeni i perspektywy. Z niewypowiedzianie lekkiego nieba spada na pierwszy plan postać księcia, jak gorący meteor." (*BO*, 189)

the contrast between Federigo and his wife as "striking" (*uderzający*) and the portrayal of the Duke's face "pulsing" (*bije*) energy reference a corporeal register that recalls the lingering touch of the cave painters on the traveler's palm. Moreover, in yet another point of overlap between Johnson and the Polish poet, it is important to note the figurative language that Herbert leverages in the passage cited above. As Aneta Grodecka has remarked in her survey of ekphrasis in the Polish literary tradition, Herbert's ekphrastic descriptions are unique in their utilization of highly poetic imagery that strays from the faithful enumeration of elements characteristic of much ekphrastic writing.[358] This lyricism is yet another example of the poet's departure from scientific standards of precision; in this instance, his similes add an otherworldly, ethereal quality to a painting that could easily be described with concrete reference to everyday objects. The second simile in particular, with its explicit acknowledgement of the ineffability of the sky it is meant to describe, appears to forefront the gap between the figure represented in the painting, the Duke, and the textual object of comparison, the blazing meteor. In this regard, the simile effectively stages the effort of transposition implied by the work of ekphrasis, highlighting the boundary between the text and the work of visual art at the same time that it attempts to overstep this boundary.

**VII. Conclusion: Mona Lisa and the Barbarian**

Piero della Francesca's depiction of Federico da Montefeltro, as described by Herbert, recalls the poet's previously cited poem *Mona Liza*, particularly as the chasm between figure and background is central to this text as well:

> laboriously smiling
> pitchy wordless and convex
>
> as if built of lenses
> against a concave landscape background

[358] Aneta Grodecka, *Wiersze o obrazach*, 115-118.

between her black back
like a moon in the clouds

and the first tree of the surroundings
is a great void of foam and light[359] (*WZ*, 253-4)

The convex figure of the Italian noblewoman curving toward the speaker sharply distinguishes itself from the concave rural backdrop bending away from him. As with the image of Federico, Herbert augments the perspectival distance between foreground and background so as to underline a visual boundary within the painting that might not be readily apparent to the average observer. This boundary, characterized as a "great void of foam and light," echoes the seven mountain borders (*siedem gór granicznych*) that the speaker has traversed in order to reach this "Jerusalem in a frame," which is nevertheless still separated from the speaker by a "purple rope":

I am standing
in the dense nettle
of a tour
on a shore of purple rope
and eyes[360] (*WZ*, 253)

The speaker's 'arrival' at the painting is therefore continually displaced, in keeping with the use of the imperfective *szedłem* ("I was walking") in the poem's first stanza, which draws attention to the movement's unfolding rather than its completion.

The ekphrastic recreation of the painting in textual form becomes part of the speaker's endeavor to arrive at this artistic holy land, and the purported impossibility of collapsing the expanses between the poem's many geographical, historical, and optical planes is imitated visually by the indentation of stanzas: the stanzas depicting La Giaconda are, for the most part, indented to

[359] "pracowicie uśmiechnięta/ smolista niema i wypukła// jakby z soczewek zbudowana/ na tle wklęsłego krajobrazu// między czarnymi jej plecami/ które są jakby księżyc w chmurze// a pierwszym drzewem okolicy/ jest wielka próżnia piany światła"

[360] "stoję/ w gęstej pokrzywie/ wycieczki/ na brzegu purpurowego sznura/ i oczu"

isolate them from those describing the action of the speaker. The final six stanzas, however, are exceptional in this regard:

> a fat and not too pretty Italian
> lets down her hair over dry rocks
>
> hewn from the meat of life
> torn from home and history
>
> horrifying waxen ears
> smothered by a scarf of resin
>
> the empty volumes of her body
> are embedded in diamonds
>
> between her black back
> and the first tree of my life
>
> lies a sword
> a melted precipice [*przepaść*][361] (*WZ*, 255)

The "abyss" (*przepaść*), which the preceding sections of this chapter have identified as one of the foremost motifs of Herbert's early work, does not appear alone in this final stanza. It is reinforced by the presence of a sword, an unmistakable allusion to the flaming sword sent by God to keep sinful mankind from entering the garden of Eden and reaching the tree of life.[362] In this instance, however, the tree of life (*drzewo życia*) is replaced by the more specific "first tree of my life" (*pierwszym drzewem mego życia*), suggesting a similarity between the idyllic environs of the speaker's early childhood and the Biblical image of paradise, both of which do not admit return. But at the same time that the speaker acknowledges the impossibility of such a return, a theme already addressed with the short reading of *Pan Cogito myśli o powrocie do rodzinnego miasta*

[361] "tłusta i niezbyt ładna Włoszka/ na suche skały włos rozpuszcza// od mięsa życia odrąbana/ porwana z domu i historii// o przeraźliwych uszach z wosku/ szarfą żywicy uduszona// jej puste ciała woluminy/ są osadzone na diamentach// między czarnymi jej plecami/ a pierwszym drzewem mego życia// miecz leży/ wytopiona przepaść"

[362] "[God] drove the man out, and stationed east of the garden of Eden the cherubim and the fiery ever-turning sword, to guard the way to the tree of life." Gen. 3: 24 (Tanakh).

(Mr. Cogito thinks about returning to his hometown), the previously identified distance between the speaker and the painted figure appears to collapse. Both the "not too pretty Italian" and the speaker, who references his solitude and the death of loved ones during the war, are marked by their separation from "home and history." In this way, the presumably Eastern European speaker, like the traveler in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, ultimately constructs a poetically devised continuum between himself and La Giaconda, arguably the primary representative of the Western canon. Both are effectively 'barbarians' severed from their homelands.

# CONCLUSION

## I. Post-Cold War Borders

The three chapters of this dissertation have treated the works of three authors—two German and one Polish—in an attempt to delineate the various means by which the literature of this epoch and from these traditions come to terms with, problematize, and reinforce the postwar division of the globe into separate spheres of influence. But to what extent are the specific formal methods that these authors employ capable of being universalized? The perspectival play employed by Uwe Johnson, for example, differs considerably from the mode of satirical critique utilized by Arno Schmidt, whose *Das steinerne Herz* is narrated through the first-person voice and point of view of its protagonist. To gather together the diverse literary strategies discussed here under the umbrella of an uniform mode of writing designated as a 'poetics of the border' would undo the work of the close readings contained in these chapters, oriented as they are toward the specific formal means of these works. The act of generalization carried out by the use of 'border poetics' in the singular would run the risk of erasing the considerable differences between these individual authors, the historical phenomena to which they are responding, and the often-distinct literary traditions within which they are working. This dissertation has endeavored to give due consideration to these distinctions while simultaneously marking similarities and points of overlap, utilizing a methodology that, as the previous chapters have demonstrated, takes its cues from the works it has analyzed.

Whereas conventional conclusions labor to systematize the interpretations and findings contained in the foregoing material, I will take a different approach in the following pages. Instead of synthesizing the treated works and strategies of Uwe Johnson, Arno Schmidt, and Zbigniew

Herbert, this conclusion will attempt to extend the methodology of the dissertation by tracing the similarities between these authors' modes of writing in a differentiated manner that, at the same time, endeavors to summarize the major takeaways of the foregoing analyses. In so doing, I will outline the contributions of this dissertation, its investigations, and methodology to contemporary scholarship in the fields of German studies, Slavic studies, and comparative literature, among other subfields. These pages will also signal the particular validity of a mode of analysis centered on borders in the contemporary moment. Though the end of the Cold War in the early nineties, which brought with it the "end of history" and the unchallenged dominion of global capitalism according to Francis Fukuyama,[363] would appear to indicate the irrelevance of scholarly preoccupation with borders, zones, and spheres of influence from the Cold War era, numerous studies and works of contemporary fiction and journalism make the contrary case. With regard to the political-geographical circumscription of Eastern Europe, despite the popularization of Kunderian and Miłoszian imaginary geographies of Central Europe in the first two decades following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, recent scholarship has sought to highlight the persistence of mentalities and habits in the countries of the former People's Republics and the Soviet Union.[364] And in the specific context of Germany, renewed interest in the literary and cultural history of the German Democratic Republic and its legacy has both returned scholarly interest to an area and epoch that had been largely neglected in the nineties and early twenty-first century and testified to

[363] See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1993).

[364] The anthropological work of Kristen Ghodsee and Alexei Yurchak, for instance, has attempted to draw attention to the lingering nostalgia experienced by Bulgarians, former East Germans, Russians and other formers members of the Soviet bloc. See Kristen Ghodsee, *Red Hangover. Legacies of Twentieth-Century Communism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017); and Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until it Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

the lingering differences between former East and West Germany.[365] Indeed, the so-called 'refugee crisis' that began in 2015 not only brought to light and reinforced the already-existing border regime of the European Union, it also raised awareness of long-neglected social, political, economic, and cultural discrepancies between the federal states of the former GDR and those of the FRG.[366]

The fall of the Berlin wall, the democratic transformations in East-Central Europe, and the spread of globalization in the nineties brought a temporary end to discussions of Cold War political-geographies, along with mounting claims that the new era being heralded would be one without borders.[367] In many cases, German and Polish literature of the nineties is characterized not only by an increasing preoccupation with global themes, but also by imaginary geographies that resemble the political geography of pre-war Europe. In his treatment of Polish literature of the nineties, Przemysław Czapliński addresses a general trend in the national literature of the era to cordon Poland off from its eastern neighbors in order to unambiguously assert its belonging to the West; such an exclusionary operation is performed, for instance, by Russian travelogues asserting

[365] For examples of such recent literary scholarship in Germany and the United States, see, e.g., Robert Blankenship, *Suicide in East German Literature. Fiction, Rhetoric, and the Self-Destruction of Literary Heritage* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2017); Bernd Blaschke, Axel Dunker & Michael Hofmann (ed.), *Reiseliteratur der DDR. Bestandsaufnahme und Modellanalysen* (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2016); Sonja Klocke, *Inscription and Rebellion. Illness and the Symptomatic Body in East German Literature* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2015); and Stephan Pabst, *Post-Ost-Moderne. Poetik nach der DDR* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016). Numerous publications on previously little-known East German artists like Bernhard Heisig, as well as works on both experimental and mainstream cinema in the GDR, testify to a growing interest in East Germany within the larger realm of cultural studies. For recent examples, see, e.g. Seán Allan, *Screening Art. Modernist Aesthetics and the Socialist Imaginary in East German Cinema* (New York: Berghahn, 2019); April A. Eisman, *Bernhard Heisig and the Fight for Modern Art in East Germany* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2018); and Seth Howes, *Moving Images on the Margins. Experimental Film in Late Socialist East Germany* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2019).

[366] For recent academic scholarship on this topic, see Jan-Jonathan Bock, "Negotiating Cultural Difference in Dresden's Pegida Movement and Berlin's Refugee Church," in *Refugees Welcome? Difference and Diversity in a Changing Germany*, ed. Jan-Jonathan Bock and Sharon Macdonald, 214-240 (New York: Berghahn, 2019).

[367] Already in 1986, the sociologist Ulrich Beck proclaimed the end of borders in his work on the *Risikogesellschaft*. See Richard Faber, "Grenzen(losigkeit) gestern und heute," in *Literatur der Grenze. Theorie der Grenze*, ed. Richard Faber and Barbara Naumann, 9-20 (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1995).

the irreconcilable Otherness of Russian ways of life, such as occurs in Ryszard Kapuściński's *Imperium* from 1993.[368] One perceives similarly uninterrogated pronouncements of Poland's unquestionable 'Europeanness' in scholarly investigations of Zbigniew Herbert's work from the same period. For instance, in his 1996 publication *Zmienność i trwanie* (Mutability and duration) Piotr Siemaszko tellingly refutes an early review of Herbert's *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* that interprets the travelogue as a response to Poland's 'disinheritance' of the Western European tradition: "Today it is difficult to completely agree with this opinion. For we see more and more clearly that Poland, after years of political and cultural separation, is finding its Western European roots extremely quickly [...]."[369] In articles and monographs on Uwe Johnson's work from the nineties, one encounters numerous preambles arguing for the continuing relevance of Johnson's writings after the end of the Cold War, as if the *Wiedervereinigung* had lessened the importance of the *Dichter der beiden Deutschland*.[370] And though scholars like Holger Helbig have drawn attention to immediate post-*Wende* works of literature and literary scholarship that articulated the repression of East German culture, history, and ways of life following reunification, these works

[368] See Przemysław Czapliński, "Wschód, czyli brud Europy" [The East, or the filth of Europe], in *Poruszona mapa*, 12-180.

[369] "Trudno dziś zgodzić się w pełni z tą opinią. Zauważamy bowiem coraz wyraźniej, że Polska, po latach politycznej i kulturowej separacji, niezwykle szybko odnajduje swoje zachodnioeuropejskie korzenie […]." Piotr Siemaszko, *Zmienność i trwanie*, 25. Siemaszko's reading is, of course, entirely at odds with the interpretation of this dissertation, which has emphasized Herbert's endeavor to problematize the purity of the 'Western European' tradition rather than assert his own membership in it.

[370] In the opening of his 1995 article on *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, Ulrich Fries entertains the question of the novel's continued relevance now that its political *Substrat* has disappeared. Ulrich Fries, "Überlegungen zu Johnsons zweitem Buch," 206. And Norbert Mecklenburg acknowledges that, although Johnson's particular brand of socialism maintains its critical capacity after the dissolution of the Eastern bloc, the quick absorption of the GDR into the FRG diminishes the utopian dimension of the author's work: "Doch mit dem überhasteten Anschluß der DDR an Westdeutschland im Zeichen eine triumphierend Konsumkapitalismus sind die Erfahrung der Differenz und die Utopie der Alternative verlorengegangen, die sich durch die Werke Johnsons hindurchziehen. Das macht sie heute befremdlich und befragenswert zugleich." Norbert Mecklenburg, *Die Erzählkunst Uwe Johnsons*, 57.

competed with West German academics, critics, and literary historians who were actively devaluating the works of East German writers, both historical and contemporary.[371]

It is not my intention here to retrace the steps of this discussion of national, regional, and supranational divisions from the fall of the Berlin wall to the recent closure of borders worldwide during the spread of COVID-19, suffice to say that the discourse of the nineties concerning the global erasure of borders appears entirely incommensurate with present realities.[372] In order to clearly characterize the difference between the sociological, theoretical, and cultural discussions of the nineties and those of the present moment, the German cultural anthropologist Sabine Hess has drawn a helpful distinction between the "mobility turn" and what she terms the "border turn":

> [T]he social- and cultural-science debate [after the end of the Cold War] was dominated by metaphors of 'flow' and 'network' [...]; and by the proclamation of paradigm shifts that favored mobility, fluidity, and hybridity over seditiousness, fixity, and homogeneity, as in James Clifford's volumes *Routes: Travels and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997) or John Urry's concept of the 'mobility turn' (2000). Now, on the contrary, one could speak of a 'border turn' or border paradigm. [...] Even if this does not hold true for the German-speaking academic context – as, to this day, no research center or professorship with such a denomination exists – we can nevertheless observe a certain kind of "explosion" of studies and research projects on borders [...].[373]

The popularization of this mobility paradigm appears to have occurred not only as a result of the end of the Cold War but also as a consequence of the expansion of the European Union, which thanks to the Schengen Agreement promised economic and political success via the dismantling

[371] See Holger Helbig, "Weiterschreiben. Zum literarischen Nachleben der DDR," in *Weiterschreiben. Zur DDR-Literatur nach dem Ende der DDR*, ed. Holger Helbig, 1-8 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007).

[372] On the closure of European borders as a result of the spread of COVID-19, see Michael Birnbaum, "Europe is closing borders amid coronavirus outbreak. They may be hard to reopen," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/europe-closing-borders-coronavirus/2020/03/17/131a6f56-67c8-11ea-b199-3a9799c54512_story.html.

[373] Sabine Hess, "Border as Conflict Zone. Critical Approaches on the Border and Migration," in *Migration. Changing Concepts, Critical Approaches*, ed. Doris Bachmann-Medick and Jens Kugele (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 84.

of borders.[374] Nevertheless, the European debt crisis that began in 2009 clearly articulated the hierarchy of core and peripheral states within the Union, drawing into question the EU's claim to parity between its member states. And as already stated, the 'refugee crisis' emphasized the extent to which the EU, rather than eliminating borders, had merely strengthened its border regime along its outermost edges and outsourced its border-processing and asylum claims to materially overwhelmed states and dictatorships.[375] The arrival of asylum seekers in Europe also highlighted the degree to which concrete borders between member states had effectively been replaced by IT systems ("smart borders") like Eurodac that track and attempt to control the movement of migrants within EU territory.[376] Indeed, as the circumstances enumerated above make clear, the expansion of the European Union brought with it a transformation and, in some cases, a strengthening of borders, rather than their eradication.

Still, to insist on the facticity of these borders is not the same as to reify them, and the acknowledgement of their very real materiality should not detract from the recognition of their discursive construction. Furthermore, as Hess warns, the shift from mobility to borders should not lead to a neglect of the agency and experience of those crossing these borders.[377] Indeed, as the previously discussed works of Uwe Johnson, Arno Schmidt, and Zbigniew Herbert demonstrate within their distinct historical and cultural contexts, a responsible and accurate approach to such

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[374] At the same time, however, this expansion produced fear in the 'core states' vis-a-vis their eastern neighbors. On German fears regarding the 2004 expansion of the EU to include Poland, see Kristin Kopp, "Christoph Hochhäusler's *This Very Moment*. The Berlin School and the Politics of Spatial Aesthetics in the German-Polish Borderlands," in *The Collapse of the Conventional. The German Film and its Politics at the Turn of the New Century*, ed. Brad Prager and Jaimey Fisher, 285-308 (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2010).

[375] See Reece Jones, "The European Union: The World's Deadliest Border," in *Violent Borders. Refugees and the Right to Move* (New York: Verso, 2016), PDF e-book; and Caitlin L. Chandler, "How Far Will the EU Go to Seal Its Borders?" *Dissent*, Summer 2018, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/how-far-eu-seal-borders-khartoum-process-central-mediterranean-migration.

[376] Stefan Luft, *Die Flüchtlingskrise*. *Ursachen, Konflikte, Folgen*, 2nd ed. (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2017), 56.

[377] Sabine Hess, "Border as Conflict Zone," 85.

boundaries takes into account the mutual influence of borders and the individuals traversing them, as well as the language and cultural production that undergird, examine, and problematize them. In fact, each of the works treated in the main chapters of this dissertation testify to the arguably singular capacity of literature to address the agency of these individual border-crossers while giving due consideration not only to the material borders, but also to the external political, social, and cultural influences that impede these crossings. In *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, *Das steinerne Herz*, and *Barbaryźnca w ogrodzie*, literature serves not only as a means of faithfully depicting the particular experience of individuals caught between the two overarching ideological blocs, it also stands out over against other discourses—mainstream political discourse especially—in its ability to self-reflexively draw attention to its own role in the construction of these divisions. For instance, although several of the characters in Arno Schmidt's *Das steinerne Herz* voice the same resentments about Germany's loss of its former eastern territories as those expressed by the Adenauer government throughout the fifties and early sixties, the novel itself draws such utterances into question by problematizing the very concept of provenance that underlies these claims. In a story in which territory, possessions, and spouses are stolen or exchanged at an alarming rate, the possibility of determining the origin of such items becomes highly dubious. Furthermore, each of these works highlights the degree to which literature and other cultural products themselves contribute to this process of demarcation. In *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, for example, works of literature and visual art frequently constitute either assertions of ownership or the expunging of heterodox traditions and ways of life. The central concern for Herbert, as for Johnson and Schmidt, remains the pursuit of a literary practice that, while acknowledging the often appropriative and exclusionary function of culture, endeavors to counteract such violent delimitations and effacements by instantiating narrative structures and executing tropic and

intertextual strategies that bring together nevertheless distinct discourses, perspectives, and traditions.

Therefore, despite their seemingly remote historical context in the Cold War, I wish to highlight the presence in these works of an early version of the productive tension between Urry's 'mobility turn' and Hess' 'border turn' that characterizes contemporary scholarship on comparative literature, migrant literature, transnational literature, and world literature. Of course, these 'turns' are formulated, in this case, in the disciplines of sociology and anthropology, but one can observe how their language and terminology both draw from and contribute to literary theory and cultural studies. Urry's description of the predominance of "networks and flows" in the contemporary world borrows noticeably from the philosophical vocabulary of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.[378] And similar formulations can be found in works of literary and cultural studies that seek to extend beyond the historically authoritative paradigm of national culture, such as in Claudia Breger's *An Aesthetics of Narrative Performance*: *Transnational Theater, Literature, and Film in Contemporary Germany*:

> In this study, I unfold this turn-of-the-twenty-first-century aesthetics of narrative performance through a case study of contemporary German culture. Given my insistence on the transnational dimensions of aesthetic production, this national delineation may seem counterintuitive. However, the underlying methodological claim is that the national and transnational are not to be positioned in opposition to one another. Rather, the constitution of national imaginaries, identities and institutions has always been an effect of transcultural flows [...]. I am pursuing an essentially comparative or, better, transnational project. At the same time, localizing my endeavor is methodologically crucial as well. [...] Framing the project in geopolitical terms thus enables me to untangle the cultural work accomplished by aesthetic practices of narrative performance against the background of specific memory cultures and claims to collective identification—cultures and claims that, again, attest to the indelible interarticulation of the national and the transnational.[379]

[378] "The concept of society will in the future be one particularly deployed by especially powerful 'national' forces seeking to moderate, control and regulate these variously powerful networks and flows criss-crossing their porous borders." John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.

[379] Claudia Breger, *An Aesthetics of Narrative Performance. Transnational Theater, Literature, and Film in Contemporary Germany* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2012),

Published over a decade after Urry's *Sociology beyond Societies*, Breger's study of narrative performance in contemporary Germany already signals a wider development in the scholarship from the mobility-oriented readings so prevalent in the nineties and the early twenty-first century to a more nuanced, dialectical methodology that considers the inflection of transnational cultural movements within the bounds of specific national traditions. Though such scholarship certainly does not all fall soundly within the parameters of border studies, it does evidence an approach to literary and cultural studies that takes full account of the contours of national politics and culture while gesturing toward a less-bounded transnational space of exchange, dialogue, and occasionally confrontation.

It is in this regard that I have asserted here the renewed validity of the previously discussed works from the Cold War, not owing primarily to any similarities between the context of their publication and the present, but because of the methods and modes of reading that they offer to contemporary preoccupations with the intertwinement of national and transnational cultures, preoccupations that are fundamentally bound up with the problem of political-geographical and cultural borders. Considering specifically the modes of literary analysis utilized in this dissertation, without wishing to reduce these methods entirely to the more or less inchoate movements and schools from which they arose, my interpretation has drawn equally from the tools of the Frankfurt School, unquestionably influential in the case of Uwe Johnson, as well as from the deconstructionist methodologies of the writers and thinkers originally associated with the French literary magazine *Tel Quel*, such as Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. The influence of the latter can be identified most clearly in my central preoccupation with intertextuality as a means of troubling the traditionally conceived 'borders' around the literary work, which structuralism struggled to uphold, and highlighting connections between seemingly sovereign texts in a manner

that problematizes their treatment as distinct entities. The most paradigmatic instance of this theory can be found in Julia Kristeva's "Le texte clos" ("The Bounded Text"): "The text is thus a *productivity*, which is to say: [...] it is a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a text various utterances taken from other texts cross [*se croisent*] and neutralize each other."[380] The 'crossing' in this dissertation's title therefore refers, at least in part, to this intertextual notion of crossing, in which the individual text is identified as a temporarily crystallized distillate of a vast and international network of utterances. One is reminded here, for instance, of Johnson's criticism of the terminological cornification or *Verhornung* of German-German divide by way of the seemingly mutual exclusive political and aesthetic jargons of the East and West German regimes; the author's inclusion of archetypal utterances and discourses from both sides could be read as an attempt to return to language its 'productivity' and mobility in accordance with the tenets of deconstruction.

By the same token, however, Johnson's highlighting of the singularity of the 'case' and his refusal to present individuals and their unique perspectives as fungible is perhaps best addressed, as already noted, by the work of Theodor Adorno, whose negative dialectics endeavors to return to particularities that which is robbed of them by general concepts:

> Das Einzelne ist mehr sowohl wie weniger als seine allgemeine Bestimmung. Weil aber nur durch Aufhebung jenes Widerspruchs, also durch die erlangte Identität zwischen dem Besonderen und seinem Begriff, das Besondere, Bestimmte zu sich selber käme ist das Interesse des Einzelnen nicht nur, das sich zu erhalten, was der Allgemeinbegriff ihm raubt, sondern ebenso jenes Mehr des Begriffs gegenüber seiner Bedürftigkeit. Er erfährt es bis heute als seine eigene Negativität.[381]

[380] Julia Kristeva, "Le texte clos," in *Sēmeiōtikē. Recherches pour une sémanalyse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1969), 52.

[381] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik. Jargon der Eigentlichkeit*, vol. 6 in *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 154.

Of course, the goals of Adorno's *Negative Dialektik* are distinct from those of *Das dritte Buch über Achim*, as the former contributes to a philosophical conversation whereas the latter is oriented, among other things, toward a more concrete political discussion. But elements of Adorno's mode of dialectic, whereby peculiarities or individuals retain their singularity and are not effaced via subsumption under an overarching concept or system, can be identified in Johnson's description of Karsch's biographical project and its attempt to preserve Achim's unique character and experiences in the face of bureaucratic oversimplifications of this complex image. Ultimately, the effect of this method is to draw a kind of boundary around the object of analysis, to draw attention to its difference as opposed to its similarity to other objects of comparison—an effect quite distinct from that of the conception of intertextuality described above, according to which connections are established and separations broken down. At the risk of oversimplifying these two approaches, one could argue that, whereas the notion of intertextuality attributed to Kristeva and other deconstructionists plays the role of transgressing the borders between individuals, utterances, discourses, and texts, the dialectical method ascribed here to Adorno and other members of the Frankfurt School actively acknowledges and, to a certain extent, labors to preserve the distinctions between them.

Naturally, to reduce the theoretical framework of this dissertation to a pairing of critical theory and deconstruction would be a vulgar simplification. For instance, the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, who does not fit comfortably into either of these schools, has been foundational to this dissertation's dialogical framing of the various authors, works, and cultures addressed. Nevertheless, this combination of concepts and methods taken from the Frankfurt School and the writers of *Tel Quel* is paradigmatic for its aggregation of ideas and approaches that, on the one hand, deconstruct divisions between constructed categories—national and supranational borders

among them—and, on the other, actively recognize obstacles and differences, be they cultural, psychological, political, or social. This merger thereby constitutes a paradoxical movement between boundlessness and boundedness that lies at the heart of contemporary debates around borders and that can be perceived in each of the works treated in this dissertation. The juxtaposition of the immeasurable infinitude of the heath and the precise demarcations of a cadastral plan symbolize this push-pull dynamic in the early works of Arno Schmidt. And this same, seemingly antithetical mixture appears in the title of Zbigniew Herbert's *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie*, as well as in the traveler's hermeneutical approach to distant civilizations and works of art, whereby the traveler strives to access the period or object in question by way of ekphrastic description and affect. In this manner, these works have much to contribute to contemporary scholarship attempting to straddle the line between the neglect of borders and their very real consequences and the reification of borders as discursive constructs. I have ventured here to unveil the contemporary relevance of these works and their close interpretation for current debates concerning political-geographical and cultural borders, particularly for those who are committed to overcoming these divides. In its careful attention to the specifically literary qualities of these works and its assertion of the special status of literature as a discourse capable of both drawing on and undermining mainstream political and cultural discourses and official 'mental maps,' this dissertation has strived to contribute to the field of border studies by demonstrating the advantages and gains of a mode of reading that gives equal weight to both the form and content of literary depictions of borders. And in bringing together works of German and Polish literature, it has attempted to provide a model for future scholarly works of comparative, transnational, and world literature by noting similarities and overarching patterns while acknowledging the differences between these distinct traditions.

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